GIRL SCOUTS *in the* REDWOODS

LILLIAN E. ROY

Miss Isabel Whitby
Xmas 1928
From Andy

GIRL SCOUTS IN THE REDWOODS

Rex showed them the sights of Mushroom City.

GIRL SCOUTS IN THE REDWOODS

BY

LILLIAN ELIZABETH ROY

AUTHOR OF
THE POLLY BREWSTER BOOKS,
THE LITTLE WASHINGTONS BOOKS

ILLUSTRATED

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GIRL SCOUTS IN THE REDWOODS

CHAPTER I

HIGH FINANCE

"I WONDER when Verny expects to hear anything definite about our scout manuscript?" mused Joan Allison aloud, to her chum and scout friend, Juliet Lee, both members of Dandelion Troop of Girl Scouts of Elmertown, New Jersey.

"Oh, haven't you heard?" exclaimed Julie. "She had a letter from the New York publisher, in which he stated that he would like to contract for all our adventures to be brought out in a series of books; but he could not think of using all the material we have compiled for each book. Verny said he needed only enough copy to make a 12mo volume."

"Well, what does she think of the proposition?" asked Joan eagerly. "You see our entire chain of mountain trips would depend upon the result of our past experiences."

"Yes, I know, Jo; and I must say that the future looks promising, as far as the publication of our books go. Verny plans to call the Troop to confer with her at her home to-morrow, and then we will discuss and decide upon the letter she received from New York, this morning."

"When did you hear all this?" asked Joan.

"Verny telephoned me at noon, and that was one reason for my coming over to see you this afternoon. I want to go over the carbon copies of our manuscripts and see what we might delete in the stories, without spoiling the continuity of the adventures."

"I'll get out the carbon copies at once and we will go over them together and mark such paragraphs or pages, which might be dropped from the narrative. I suppose Verny will be the judge on this cutting?" said Joan interrogatively.

"Yes, and we will bring it to a final vote at the meeting to-morrow," agreed Juliet.

"Well, I only hope and pray that something comes of this publishing offer," sighed Joan fervently. "Our vacation fund for this summer's mountaineering is too low to carry us farther than the Razorback Hill, back of Slumpdale."

Julie laughed heartily, because Slumpdale was that portion of Elmertown where the poverty-stricken citizens herded together. And Razorback

Hill was a barren, stony, hard-baked knoll rising back of Slumpdale, with no green or lovely thing on or about it.

Now Julie answered cheerfully: "But you seem to forget that a check is due us from the Elmertown Record for our last installment of 'Girl Scouts' Adventures'."

"Jule! can you blame me for forgetting such an insignificant thing?" scorned Joan.

Julie laughed again, this time so contagiously that Joan joined in.

"Whenever you girls show signs of having the 'blues' over the condition of our vacation fund, I find it always acts like a tonic to take out all our promising channels of income and air them for you," declared Julie. "Now for the first——"

Joan interrupted her by saying jeeringly: "I know just what you wish to say, Julie; but this case of consumption is so far gone that nothing short of a miracle will save its life. You talk about taking our income out in order to air it and let the sun shine upon it, with the vain hope that signs of renewed life will result. But you seem to forget, Jule, that this is the last part of March, and Gilly and V. plan to start for California in April! How is it possible, or even probable, for Dandelion Troop to invigorate our vacation fund enough to accept their invitation to accompany them for this

desirable summer on the Pacific Coast?" Joan's tone and pessimistic expression showed the drab state of her mind.

"See here, Jo!" reprimanded Julie sternly, "In the first place, your frame of mind never gets you anywhere, and you know it right well! In the next place, our Fund does *not* show any signs of tuberculosis, as you suggest; nor is it capable of ever having it, since it is a healthy normal child of the principles of Scoutdom. I will admit, for the sake of argument just now, that our bank account reveals the fact that we consumed the money on our Troop's visit to New York City, during the Girl Scout Drive for a permanent Fund and Headquarters for the Cause. But that was *healthy* consumption, in order to exhibit our unusual collections of flora and other of Nature's products secured during our mountaineering in the past few summer seasons; and it was done with an excellent purpose—that of enthusing the people of New York, with a zeal to contribute generously to a work which is so estimable as is Girl Scoutdom. Verny is sure that our private exhibition held in such a well-known and centrally located hotel, and our personal reception of guests to the exhibition during the Drive, not only educated the public and brought their contributions lavishly from their pockets for

the Cause, but also will be the wedge to start an opening for our own future success."

"I sincerely hope so," returned Joan. "But several months have gone by since our return from New York City, and so far the only results are the pleasures we derived from the week in the City, and the decrease in the fund."

"Pshaw! Jo, you always seem to forget that 'that which blesses one blesses all'. It is the Law of Giving," retorted Julie impatiently.

At this moment the two friends heard the front hall door slam and then footsteps were heard hastily crossing the floor. In another minute's time Ruth Bentley, one of the girl founders of Dandelion Troop, rushed through the doorway.

"Oh, girls!" exclaimed she, the moment she saw Joan and Julie, "have you heard the wonderful news?" Ruth's face showed she was enjoying an unusual thrill, and she cracked her palms together excitably as she stood waiting for an answer to her query.

"News! what news?" demanded both girls in one breath.

"Why, Verny tried to get you, Jule, on the 'phone a short time ago; but Betty told her you were not at home, nor could she say just where you had gone. Then Verny told Betty about the wire she had just received, and then she telephoned my house,

thinking that you possibly might be with me. That's how I got the news, and I told Verny that I saw you going into Joan's house, and that I was about to go and join you. So she told me to tell you girls all about the message."

"Yes, yes! but tell us the message," cried both girls, in an expectant frame of mind.

"We—ll," resumed Ruth, evidently enjoying the manner of serving her news in such a slow method, "it's just this: Verny thinks it all comes of our visit and exhibit in New York City."

"Oh! do get down to brass tacks, won't you?" cried Joan.

"You know we are half-crazy to hear what it is all about," added Julie impatiently.

Ruth laughed appreciatively and said: "One of the leading newspapers of New York has wired an offer to Julie and her Troop, to buy enough copy to run in the Sunday Magazine section for a serial of ten installments. Verny has to wire an answer tomorrow before four o'clock."

Joan could not utter a word, but Julie laughed and hugged herself as she rocked back and forth in her delight. "I knew it! I knew it! And here sat drab old Jo wailing over her lost Jerusalem."

"But that's not all, girls," added Ruth, giggling at her successful attempt in keeping certain tidbits of the news for the last. "Not only will the paper

buy Jule's story, but it has asked the price of the pen and ink sketches which Joan made for the *Elmertown Record,* and which are expected to appear in the books which our New York publisher is to issue."

"Wh-y-! It can't be true!" gasped Joan.

"Who says it can't be true?" retorted Ruth gleefully.

"But it sounds too *good* to be true," explained Joan.

"There you go again, Jo! After all I've tried to teach you—that nothing is too good to be true!" declared Julie emphatically.

"Let's run right over to Verny's house now," suggested Joan suddenly; "and see for ourselves just what the telegram says."

"All right, 'doubting Thomas'," laughed Julie, jumping up from the window seat and seeking for her coat and hat, which she had flung down upon coming into the room.

But another member of the Troop now came in and joined the three companions. It was Betty Lee, Juliet's twin sister, but nothing alike were these twins.

Julie was darkhaired and Betty was true blonde. Julie was a spark of energy, Betty was serenity itself; Julie was ambitious and positive; Betty satisfied and negative. In many other ways the

twins showed that they were the exact opposites of each other, but the love which twins usually have for each other was so in this instance to a marked degree. It sometimes seemed to friends that the very fact that Betty being so opposite and dependent upon her sister for positive conditions made Julie love her all the more.

Betty now glanced from one to the other of the three girls and said: "Julie, did Ruth tell you about the wonderful news? Verny told me it came to her house, addressed to the Captain of Dandelion Troop. But the moment she read the contents she knew it should have been sent to you and Joan. Now she says she wants us to come in and see her about it."

"We were just going to start out, when you came in," said Joan, thrusting her arms into her coat-sleeves and hastily buttoning the coat about her. Then she caught up her soft felt hat and said she was ready to go.

"Well, girls," laughed Ruth, as they ran down the steps of the piazza, "it looks as if you two scouts with your talents, and the rest of us with our efforts to help along the good work, were actually putting Elmertown 'on the map'. Who in great New York City ever knew there was such a burg down in Jersey, before Dandelion Troop spent a

week in its midst and exhibited its rare works of Nature's art?"

High spirits produce spontaneous joy and laughter, and the enthusiasm felt by the scouts resulted in gay laughter and happy moods.

"Did Verny say anything about having the other scouts at this meeting?" asked Julie, of Ruth and Betty.

"Not to me," replied Ruth.

"Nor to me either," added Betty.

"Then she will attend to that herself," judged Julie. "Perhaps she merely wishes to find out from Joan and me what our wishes are regarding a sale of our work to the newspaper."

"Yes, that is what I think," agreed Joan.

The walk from Joan's home to the Vernon house was not long, but it will give us time enough to review the past doings of Dandelion Troop, and to those that have not known these scouts in previous books it affords an opportunity to become acquainted.

In the first book called *Girl Scouts of Dandelion Camp* the founders of the Troop first met the reader. Mrs. Vernon, Captain of the newly fledged group of scouts, went with them to spend the camping season on the mountain near Elmertown. To be able to get such camping outfits as they might need, and to pay for their expenses for the summer

in the woods, these girls earned the money by weeding dandelions from the vast expanse of lawns at the Vernon estate. In spite of dire experiences and promised illnesses (foretold by the neighbors) which would follow such a silly thing as camping in a woods and trying to make believe it was sport, the girls had not spent more than a month in camp, before many other girls of their circle joined them and proved to their shocked parents that scoutdom was one of the best institutions yet organized for girls, as well as for boys. But the grand climax arrived and converted the people of Elmertown, when this band of scouts saved the life of Mr. Gilroy, after his assault and robbery by the two escaped convicts. Not only the reward offered by the State, for the discovery of these criminals and their arrest, but the gratitude of Mr. Gilroy expressed in a check for the Troop's future needs, made it possible for the scouts to organize properly and plan for a summer's camp in the Adirondack Mountains.

The second book of their mountain camp records is called *Girl Scouts in the Adirondacks.* Mr. Gilroy owned a large tract of land along one of the lakes belonging to the Fulton Chain, and he invited the members of Dandelion Troop to visit and camp here for their second summer. Mr. Gilroy's summer lodge on the summit of the mountain, and a Boy

Scout Camp nearby made things interesting during the season. Not only did Mr. Gilroy plan several thrilling events, in which both girls and boys contested for honors, but he also proved to be the host that freely entertained both Troops at the same time. Thus the girls were able to learn many valuable things about Scoutdom, which they had never read in books, nor heard from other girl scouts.

In their Adirondack Camp that summer, Dandelion Troop raised a prize pig which took the reward at the County Fair and started a Vacation Fund for the scouts. There were other cash rewards presented to them for valor and first aid rendered at a small hotel fire at the extreme end of the Fulton Chain of Lakes. Mr. Gilroy had taken the Scouts on a canoe trip and, having reached a far point of the Fulton Chain, where he planned to turn back, he decided to spend one night at the summer resort, then resume the canoe trip the following day. That night the fire gave the scouts their opportunity to show how to apply first aid in sudden need. And the result of this aid came from a grateful individual, in form of a cash reward for their Vacation Fund.

This fund had grown so nicely and promised to afford the "Dandelioners", as the girls were called by their families and friends, the wherewithal to

take a longer and more thrilling trip to such mountains as they had read and heard of, but had never hoped to see. Then the third summer opened with an amazing invitation.

In the third book called *Girl Scouts in the Rockies,* it appears that Mr. Gilroy was sent west to secure certain unusual specimens of moraine from the glacial deposits of the Rocky Mountains. Being a friendly man he did not wish to go without company. And being so fond of the Dandelioners, what so natural as that he should invite them to go with him.

After due consideration and discussions it was finally decided that the Captain, representing the entire Troop of scouts, should accept the offer to adventure in the Rockies upon one condition: that the girls were to share expenses for the outing, since they wished to be self-supporting in every way possible.

Mr. Gilroy agreed after many protests, and so the group of old friends started for the West. The numerous incidents and thrills, as well as a few narrow escapes experienced by Julie and Joan, provided enough text for a dozen books, but this had to be condensed by Julie after they got home, in order to have the *Elmertown Record* promise to publish it.

The number of girls that enjoyed this trip to

the Rocky Mountains was small, because so many mothers feared the dangers and other bugbears said to exist for campers; and their ultimatum which forbade their daughters to take advantage of this wonderful outing, ended in sending the Dandelion Troop off with a minority of its membership.

Before they had finished this summer's outing, however, and were thinking of their following summer in the wonder-regions of New Mexico and Arizona, the scouts learned that parents were heartily sorry that they had deprived their children of such a fine experience in the Rockies. Consequently it was believed that no new objections would be raised for the future plans of camping.

When the time came, nevertheless, that Dandelion Troop began to prepare, to join Mr. Gilroy and Mr. Vernon for the tour of the two southwestern states, there were demurs by several mothers, so that once again the girls of those families had to see their companions start away without them. But this was short circuited after Julie Lee's descriptive articles appeared in the paper, and parents saw how educational and instructive these tours proved to be for the girl scouts. Therefore the mothers relented and sent their tardy daughters on to join the Troop in Santa Fé. From that point on the united scout Troop enjoyed the rest of the summer.

And now we find them planning for the advancing season, to join Mr. Gilroy, always called "Gilly" by them, and Mr. Vernon, known as V. to the Troop, on this long summer's outing in California. Mr. Gilroy being sent there to secure a few specimens of glacial deposits from one or two of the famous peaks of the Sierras, and Mr. Vernon, being a deeply interested lumberman, to attend the Lumbermen's Convention in San Francisco that year.

By this time the four girls reached the Vernon house and the maid admitted them without delay. Directing them to the library, where they would find Mrs. Vernon, the girl went about her household duties. The scouts hurried across the hall and entered the room, where they found their Captain waiting for them.

CHAPTER II

PLANNING FOR THE SUMMER

"COME in and sit down, girls," called Mrs. Vernon, motioning with one hand to the visitors, while holding the telephone receiver to her ear with the other hand.

The scouts quietly took the seats preferred by each one and waited silently for the Captain to conclude her conversation. Thus it happened that they heard what she said in reply to some one speaking at the other end of the wire.

"Yes, I know that; but it will help matters if you call on this editor and introduce yourself in some way. You know all the ins and outs of business customs and intrigues, and I want you to see that the girls get the very most out of this offer for publication," said Mrs. Vernon. The girls exchanged glances with each other, for they understood that the conversation was in behalf of their manuscripts.

"I suppose so," now said the Captain, following the message coming over the wire from some one unseen. "I never thought of asking for advance payment on the articles. That is just where your

help will prove excellent: taking care of the points of which we, experienced in scout work but not in business tactics, are not aware."

Once again there was silence in the room, though the girls could hear a faint vibration coming from the telephone instrument, telling them that the speaker at the other end of the wire was engaged in replying to Mrs. Vernon's words.

"That will be splendid of you! And I will permit you to use my power of attorney in signing up any contracts you may deem advisable for the Troop. But there must be one condition mentioned: the consent of every member of the Troop to the sale of the newspaper rights, before the agreement is valid. I have called a general meeting for to-morrow noon, since the editor wrote me that he would expect a reply to his telegram then. Julie, Joan, Betty and Ruth just came in to confer with me on this proposition, and I called you up to see if you could visit this man and get better terms for us."

Now the four girls were all ears, to try and hear what was said at the other end of the telephonic connection.

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Mrs. Vernon, with a smile and a nod to the girls. "You must not dream of letting the editor know that we are anxious to let him have our text. Just pretend that you dropped in to chat with him regarding our interests, and to

let him know that we are fully aware of the value of our manuscripts. Also, in a casual way, be sure to let him hear that a New York publisher has signed up with us to publish our series of books. This ought to show the man that our material is appreciated by readers and others."

With a "thank you" and a "good-by" Mrs. Vernon hung up the receiver.

"That was Gilly, girls! V. telephoned me soon after I had talked with Ruth, to tell me that he would not return home as he had planned to-night, because Gilly met him in the City and they expected to remain there another day before coming back to Elmertown. I was surprised to hear that Gilly had concluded his business at home and would be free to come on and visit with us so soon. He said, you remember, in his last letter, that he might be detained until May first."

"But I'm glad he is through before then, Verny," said Julie.

"Yes; and he may be able to suggest a way in which we might meet the expenses of the summer's mountaineering," was Mrs. Vernon's reply.

"I don't suppose I would be able to add very much to our Vacation Fund even if I did hire my services out to one of Elmertown's merchants," ventured Betty, who had taken a course in stenog-

raphy, in order to take dictation and do the typewriting for her sister Julie.

The three girls with her laughed merrily at the very idea, but Mrs. Vernon smiled and said: "That is very generous of you, Betty; for you are so sensitive in meeting strangers, and so retiring about your own talents, when Julie is around to exploit herself. Nevertheless the motive counts most, dear, and that will open a door for the means to come to us, whether you secure work now or not."

Betty smiled happily at the Captain's commendation, and her twin sister exclaimed: "Good gracious, Verny! to hear you talk of my exploiting myself, one would think I was dreadfully egotistical and self-opinionated."

"Well, you are opinionated, Julie, as we all realize; and I wouldn't give a leather cent for any one without an ego manifesting itself. However you are doing exactly as many young folks do—you believe you know certain things better than others you meet, and you love to have yourself heard. Now I leave it to your associates if this is not the fact?" Mrs. Vernon smilingly turned to Julie's three friends.

"Jule, the Captain is right! We dare not tell you that much, because you'd have a brain-storm, and goodness only knows what would become of our heads. Likely they'd be blown off with the gale."

As Joan spoke the others laughed,—even Julie laughed.

"All right then!" acquiesced Julie, nodding her head, "I'll agree to go way back and sit down with Betty, and take lessons from her."

"That is not your work, Julie," corrected the Captain. "You are your own individual self and it needs expression. You can never conceive the ideal of another soul, nor can you expect to take that one's place in the world. Just *let* your own ideals express and manifest themselves to others, without egotism or self-consciousness. In other words let the divine consciousness of you prove to the world just what you are and can do—that is all."

The four scouts were accustomed to these loving corrections and constructive admonitions from their Captain and now all four of the girls took the lesson to heart to ponder over in the future.

"Well, now," suggested Joan, after a few moments' silence, "what say you if we get down to business and figure out just how much capital we will need for this trip to the Sierras?"

"I say that is a very excellent idea," laughed Mrs. Vernon.

So the five gathered about the great, circular, library table and started to suggest, plan, and jot down upon paper whatever might be necessary in

cash and equipment for that season's adventures in the mountains.

"I wish the Museum in New York City would give us its answer about accepting those curios and relics we collected last summer in the old Pueblos of New Mexico and Arizona," said Ruth.

"I have been told that ofttimes they buy those collections outright. If we wished to dispose of the objects, which we found and have proved to be authentic, according to the Smithsonian Institute, I believe we could get our price for them from the Museum of Natural History. Even if they refused them for the department of ethnology, I know of several interested individuals that might buy them of us," remarked the Captain.

"Oh! I'd hate to sell them outright," returned Julie. "It is different when one loans such treasure to a museum, which shows them to a large public; but selling them seems to me to be parting with a personal possession, which might never be replaced again."

"That's the way I feel about it," added Joan. Ruth and Betty agreed also with this idea and the Captain smiled approvingly.

"I like to hear that explanation agreed to by you all, because it shows me that you are not concerned about commercializing your trophies and trying anxiously to raise money by this means. This at-

titude of mind will surely result in providing us with the means to take this long trip," said Mrs. Vernon.

At this moment the maid announced Judith and Edith Blake, two other members of Dandelion Troop. It seems the two girls had heard from Ruth's mother of the meeting hastily convened at the Vernon house, so they came in to be present.

After greetings were over, Judith gave the scouts an item of news. "Edith isn't going with us for this trip—that is if we raise the money to take us West."

"No?" asked the Captain, surprised at this information. "But why, Edith?"

Edith was the youngest member of the Dandelion Troop, and she did not feel the enthusiasm which the other scouts had in their absorbing work in Scoutdom. Edith was, as her sister Judith called it, mentally indolent, and preferred to dream instead of getting up and doing what her mind pictured for her to accomplish. By her wonderful dreams of all she planned to do in Life, and the wild flights of imagination, she had impressed Mrs. Blake with the firm belief that she, the youngest daughter, had a genius which needed development by the best teachers. The scout girls knew that Edith had a very sweet voice and could sing well; but they also had heard Judith sing and they be-

lieved her's to be the best voice; for she proved it over and over again during the times the Dandelion scouts practiced their songs.

"Yes," drawled Edith, in a tone which condescended to her hearers, "Mother realizes that I need the best masters of voice-culture in New York, in order to develop my singing voice properly. I feel sure that I shall be a prima donna before many years. You see, don't you, that I am fitted for just that work?"

The scouts exchanged glances with each other, but said nothing. The Captain replied to Edith's speech.

"We do not know just what you are fitted for, Edith; but your mother may be right in taking you to New York to learn from the best and truest teachers there whether you really have such rare qualities in your voice as will quickly advance you in the arduous work of cultivating a voice fit to sing before a vast audience. The reward of being hailed as a prima donna is not so easily won. Self-sacrifice and constant application to work makes a singer ready to appear before a critical public. Technique and musical understanding, as well as the gift of feeling, seeing, and hearing pure tones in harmony and melody and rhythm, are essentials." Mrs. Vernon had been a highly educated lyric so-

prano in her young womanhood, so she understood that of which she now spoke.

"You seem to overlook the fact, Captain, that some voices are pure gifts—such as Jenny Lind's wonderful gift. I feel that I have a gift which is natural, and it will need little training," was Edith's self-satisfied reply.

"Well, Edith," returned Mrs. Vernon smilingly, as she got up and made room at the table for the two sisters to take their places in the conference, "The very *faith* you have, even be it a blind faith, will in time place you where you now believe yourself to be. Still I will hold to my original opinion: all students in any great undertaking, have to devote their souls and time to the perfecting of a gift. Even Christ Jesus had to study for many, many years, in the work of metaphysical demonstrations, before he 'did the works' of his Father. And he, as we all know, was the Sun of Life—the Son of God. How, then, can we expect to win the prize of any high calling, without sacrifice and development?

"Now, girls, let us forget Edith and her ideals for the time and devote ourselves to solving this knotty problem." So saying, the Captain became actively engaged in the work before her.

"Eliminating Edith from our number to spend the summer in the California Redwoods, how many

will we have on our list, Joan?" asked Julie, referring to the scout who was presiding secretary for the season's outing.

"Jude, you are certain now that Edith will not go?" asked Joan, turning to Judith Blake.

"Why, of course!" declared Edith for herself. "Mother has written and engaged rooms at a boarding house, which was recommended to her through a singing master in New York. We hope to be ready to go at the time you all start *via* New York City for your trip."

"All right!" retorted Joan, firmly striking out Edith's name from the list before her. "That leaves you out, and once we are all set you will not be able to break in again, even if you change your weather-vane mind and prefer to go with us."

"I think that is very unkind of you, Jo," whimpered Edith. "I know that my mind is not changeable as you would infer by your speech. I am very firm and decided in what I want, and I generally get it."

"Yes," agreed Judith sarcastically, "you certainly are firm when you want your own way in anything, and you generally get it, because we all hate unpleasantness and sulks in the home."

"Come, come, scouts!" reprimanded the Captain, "this is no way to open a meeting. If this continues I shall adjourn till to-morrow."

This undesirable result to continued nagging quickly brought about a better state of affairs; and the meeting progressed with a roll-call of those girls that had positively decided to join the Troop for the season's outing in the west.

"Now, let's see," mused Joan. "Jule and Betty are two; Ruth makes three; Jude and myself are five; Anne Bailey and Amy Ward make seven, and Hester Wynant, eight; Verny makes the ninth. With Gilly and V. we have a party of eleven instead of the twelve, which we would have had with Edith going with us."

"And Tally will make that twelfth, after we reach San Francisco," added the Captain.

"Oh, did you hear from him, Verny?" cried a chorus of eager voices; Tally, the Indian Guide, who accompanied them on their mountaineerings since their camping trip in the Rockies, was a general favorite with the Troop.

"Gilly told me over the 'phone that he had a letter, in which Tally expressed himself as 'delight to pieces' at the invitation to be a member of our party this year," returned Mrs. Vernon.

"You were going to tell us all about what Gilly said to you as we entered the room, Verny, but you forgot it," said Ruth.

"Then I will not lose more time," was the smiling reply. "I'll report now. But first we'll

tell Judith and Edith that before they joined us I had had a conversation with V. over the telephone, and he told me about Gilly being in New York. They are remaining there over-night, and when certain business affairs are finished they are coming to Elmertown together.

"Taking advantage of the news that Gilly had finished his business in Albany sooner than he had anticipated, and was free to be in New York and, later, here with us in Elmertown, I asked V. to have him call me up, because I had an important matter for him to attend to in the City.

"Gilly telephoned me, as you have heard, and I explained to him that he was to call upon a newspaper editor in New York and try to transact our business with him for us. I explained all about the wire I had received and that we had agreed to sell our manuscripts for the book rights only. This left it free for us to sell the newspaper rights if we chose to do so.

"Gilly knows this editor very well, and he promised to do everything possible to make a satisfactory and advantageous deal with him. If this succeeds, girls, we will have ample funds to pay for our expenses to the Redwoods and back."

As Mrs. Vernon concluded her explanation, Edith remarked in a blasé tone: "I don't see why you Dandelioners insist upon refusing the invita-

tion from Gilly and V., to become their guests for the summer? What difference does it make, whether Gilly uses his surplus cash of which he has so much, in paying for your outing, or whether you get him to use his influence with this editor to buy your copy of the scout adventures?"

"It makes all the difference in the world, Edith!" said Julie seriously.

"You couldn't understand, Edith," added Judith impatiently, "because you never earned a cent for yourself, nor do you sacrifice any desire for the good to others. So you can't feel the pleasure it gives us to spend our own earnings for this outing, rather than accept the hospitality of big generous Gilly!"

Edith curled her pretty rosy lip with an indulgent smile, and then pushed her chair away from the table, "I can't see that I am necessary here, Jude," said she; "and I can spend my few precious days left before we start for New York in shopping."

"You're right," retorted Judith, her eyes snapping fire, "we can dispense with your presence, but the store-keeper on Main Street cannot. But you'd better not charge any more silly items on Dad's bill there, or you know what will be the result?"

Edith tossed her head angrily at her sister's warning and flounced from the room. A few

moments later the scouts heard the front door slam.

"Jude, what ever has gotten into Edith's head to change her so?" asked Julie anxiously.

"One would hardly believe that a year could make such a difference in a girl," sighed Mrs. Vernon.

"I'll tell you," said Judith. "Edith has had her pretty blonde head turned by two new-comers to Elmertown. These New York girls are not good company for Edith, yet she is crazy about them. They are forever with her, or telephoning to her. They live far beyond their means; but they put on so much 'dog' that Edith is impressed with their social prestige—as they term it. Even mother is influenced by Edie's description and fascination of them, and this is one reason why mother and sister are going to the City to train Edith's voice: the Muelbacks would have it that the child has a great future awaiting her. Mrs. Muelback is the one who arranged everything for this New York venture—from the selection of a boarding house, to the teacher of voice-culture, who charges five dollars an hour, and demands fifty dollars down in advance before accepting a pupil."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Julie. "Did your mother pay it without interviewing him first?"

"She gave Mrs. Muelback the money to pay it," said Judith, "and that amounts to the same thing, you see."

"And goodness knows what sort of a boarding house it will turn out to be, if that woman selected it," added Joan.

"There is one silver lining to the cloud, any way," laughed Judith, "I won't be held responsible for Edith's mistakes this summer, as I was last year. I shall be free to enjoy myself to the utmost, while she is happy in New York trying to compete with the established stars of grand opera."

"Well, but this is not making any plans for financing our trip," was the reminder from the Captain.

Thereupon the scouts became busy and figured up all assets on hand and those promised to be paid in shortly. One of those assets might come from the collector, who had visited the Dandelion Scouts' Exhibit during the Drive in New York; he had admired the collection of flowers, insects and minerals shown by the Elmertown scouts, and his offer for their duplicate collection had been accepted by them. It was to transact the business of delivering this collection to the buyer, and receiving the money for it, that had taken Mr. Vernon to the City that week.

"Then there will be the check in advanced royalty, which the publisher agreed to send us," added Joan eagerly.

"And the hope of selling our stories to the newspaper," was Mrs. Vernon's reminder.

"If we only knew how much Gilly can get out of that editor for us," remarked Julie, "we might add up and find we have enough on hand for the trip."

"Don't forget that we agreed this year not to touch one cent of the fund which would pay for the other scouts' expenses if they had decided to go with us. You remember last year, when they followed after us, and were so glad to find we had not touched the money belonging to them: that was the thing that made it possible for them to join us," said Betty anxiously.

"Rest your soul, Betzy!" laughed Julie, patting her twin upon the head. "We have subtracted the sum belonging to the other girls and that will remain intact in the bank to pay for their professed choice of work in place of this outing. That is as it should be, as long as the other girls really think they prefer to study. I choose to go west, because I can write up the trip and make my supply out of our adventures." Julie was the gifted authoress of the Troop, as you remember.

"And I need the trip to get the snapshots, which I hope to reproduce in colors and crayon for our stories," added Joan, the artist of the group of scouts.

"Well," admitted Betty comically, though quite innocently, "I am *not* going to carry my typewriting machine to use during the summer, because Verny always reminds us to travel light, and my machine is not very light, you know."

Her words, as usual, caused a general laugh, and she gazed wide-eyed from one to the other and then asked: "What did I say now that sounded so funny? I do declare! every time I speak, you scouts break forth in peals of merriment."

They laughed again at this, and Betty puckered her brow in trying to solve the puzzling riddle. Then she gave it up and asked the Captain: "Is it not so, Verny? If you ever tried to lift and carry my machine from the family sitting room to my own room on the third floor, you'd *know* how heavy it is. If I had a portable one I might plan to carry it everywhere."

The joking and laughing ended because of the lack of physical power to continue it, and Betty felt resigned without having discovered the cause of their laughter.

"If our books turn out as we hope they will, there need be no worry over expense accounts next summer, Verny," ventured Joan.

"If?" queried Julie, dramatically. "Why say 'if', when you *know* it is going to be a great seller.

In fact *the* best seller on the book mart of the year."

"You know what V. said, girls," laughed Mrs. Vernon now. "He admitted that it might be a great seller, but he knew before-time that it was a *fine cellar,* where you have stored all the good products of your experiences in scoutdom."

"The day may come soon, when V. will have need of the key to our cellar store-house," joked Julie.

"Then we shall tell him we have misplaced it, and no one dare pick the lock," added Judith.

"Better not say anything about sellers or cellars until V. has handed over the cash for the stories," said judicious Joan.

"I always said Jo should have been a merchant dealer, for she certainly knows how to get the best of every trade," declared the Captain laughingly.

The maid appeared at the door now, and made a sign to her mistress. And she, glancing at her visitors and seeing that they comprehended what it all meant, got up and smiled and led the way from the library to the sun-parlor, where refreshments were waiting for the ever-ready scouts.

CHAPTER III

GILLY REAPS FOR THE TROOP

During the pleasant time of munching delicious chocolate layer cake and the sipping of fragrant cocoa the scouts continued their plans.

"Since Tally makes the twelfth one in our crowd, and the automobiles we hire seldom hold more than five without crowding, we shall have to use seven-passenger cars whenever we want to visit the points of interest in the stopping places along the route, Verny," ventured Betty, anxious as usual for the comfort and economy of her companions.

"That's so! Betzy," declared her sister teasingly. "But we can drop out two members of the group, whenever we wish to hire motors for a drive: you and Verny can be left with our baggage. We will call for you when we finish our sight-seeing."

Betty failed to see that Julie was teasing, and she said: "I don't mind, but it seems unkind to ask Verny to give up any of the drives. You girls must take turns in giving a place to her in the cars."

The scouts laughed at Betty's seriousness, and Mrs. Vernon said: "If they dare drop me from their plans, Betty, there will be no outing at all."

"You're right!" exclaimed Judith, wagging her head emphatically. "If Verny were not the chaperon she is, not a blessed mother in Elmertown would listen to our going anywhere for the summer."

"I must be an awful dragoness then," laughed Mrs. Vernon.

"Well, Verny, we won't say right to your face how your eyes shoot fire, and your nostrils snort steam, and your entire being quivers to get at our beaus during these excursions," spoke Julie, controlling the twinkle in her bright eyes, "but our mothers know how safe we are under your guard. They realize that not one of us will have an opportunity to elope with an admiring swain, and that we will be delivered safe and sound to our loving family circle at the end of the summer."

"Oh, Julie," was Betty's mild rebuke at this lengthy speech, "you know that is not so! Verny is almost too lenient with you and Joan. Just look at the way you led that poor, dear Sandy about by the nose last summer in New Mexico? If I had been Verny I should have made you go back home, so there!"

"If I were not certain that Betty never has eyes for a beau I would say she was jealous of me and Sandy," said Julie, while her companions laughed merrily at Betty's words.

"I only felt sorry for him," confessed Betty.

"Then you must use your sympathetic help this coming season, Betzy, to protect any young men we might meet on the tour. For I shall use every art known to a siren, in securing devotion from the youth of the male specie, in order to 'get copy' for our next book," threatened Julie.

"Siren? Then you really plan to take the horn from our car?" quickly retorted Ruth.

This remark caused laughter, and poor Judith choking over a fragment of cake broke up the trend of conversation. Having finished the cake, and seeing that no other refreshments were to be had at that visit, the scouts admitted to their Captain that they had enjoyed their afternoon immensely. Julie added a reservation.

"That is, we enjoyed as much as you granted us. What you plan to do with the other half of that chocolate cake is not our business, I suppose."

Everyone knew Julie's weakness for chocolate layer cake and her remark created a shout of derision at her expense. Then Mrs. Vernon said: "The other half of that cake, you seem to forget, was enjoyed yesterday. How can you have that half which you ate yesterday and expect to eat it now?"

'That's so!" admitted Julie, the irrepressible.

"Seems to me, however, that this afternoon's half tasted much better than yesterday's cake."

"Simply because the flavor of chocolate does not remain in your memory, when the cake is gone. That which appears before your eyes to be enjoyed at the moment, looks to be the best," was Joan's deduction.

"Um——m—! I must say that 'all chocolate cakes look alike to muh,'" was Julie's interpretation of the slang phrase.

"You ought to be grateful to know that Anne Bailey was not one of our group to-day," said Judith, as they reached the front door.

"I pity her! and I congratulate myself at her absence," giggled Julie. "With that healthy scout appetite, where would my portion of cake have gone?" Thus joking and laughing the girls said good-by to their hostess and started down the pathway to the street. Mrs. Vernon stood watching them go, then called after them: "Don't forget the meeting to-morrow! We'll have news from Gilly before then."

"Don't you worry!" retorted Julie. "We'll be here with all hands open for the reward of our past works."

Therefore the next day the Vernon library became the meeting place for all those scouts that were planning to go on this Californian tour.

Even a few of the girls not so blessed as to be going with their friends came to the conference to hear about their precious book and the stories for the newspaper serial.

From the sparkle in the Captain's eyes the scouts knew that splendid news awaited the telling as soon as they were seated and silent. Consequently no sound was heard from the usually merry Troop, and order was called almost immediately after the girls' arrival.

"I have a most surprising bit of news to tell you, girls," began the Captain. "Gilly telephoned me late last night that he had succeeded in disposing of the first serial rights of our scout adventures. At first I thought he meant that the editor who had wired us for the rights of publishing the serial in his Sunday Magazine section of the newspaper was glad to advance us a check on account. But I did not stop to think that Gilly said 'first serial rights'. He then explained that he had 'sold out' to one of the standard magazines published in New York, and then went to consult the newspaper man about selling second serial rights as soon as the first rights were releasing their last installment.

"The editor had no choice: either he must take what was offered, or he must let some other alert newspaper man get our matter. Girls, Gilly sold *him* too!"

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Good for Gilly!" chorused from every scout present.

"And best of all, the agreement is not made for so much per word, which is usually paid upon delivering copy for that current issue; but Gilly sold outright and got a wonderful price at that! It is sufficient to pay our expenses for the entire summer, and the portions belonging to the girls who remain at home to study music, art and their favorite professions will have the same sums as we draw from the Fund, set aside for them."

"But, listen, Captain," objected one of the stay-at-home scouts, as they were designated now, "It does not seem just that we girls should benefit equally with Julie, who wrote the stories, and Joan who illustrated them. They used their time and ability to bring this splendid return about. And they ought to be repaid for such labors."

"You forget, perhaps, that Jo and I would never have had the adventures to write up had the first bank account not been used to defray the costs of the trip to the Rockies. So few of you scouts were permitted to share in that wonderful adventure, that it is now a balancing of generosity for us all, in sharing this reward money."

"Well, all I can say to that, Julie, is: I thank you all, and agree to hug my share closely to my heart

to prevent it getting away from me," promised one of the girls.

The other scouts laughed and several of them thanked those girls who, in order to bless the entire Troop, had devoted time and talent to the work of developing the manuscripts.

At this moment the girl nearest the library window called the attention of her companions to two tardy members of the Troop coming up the walk to the house. Julie stretched her neck and saw, then commented in her usual comical way.

"A job lot coming to our wholesale department."

The two late-comers were admitted by the maid during the hilarity caused by Julie's words. Of course they felt that they had missed something very amusing, and Helen asked to be told it.

"Oh, it was nothing much," returned Julie, nonchalantly. "Just an opinion expressed when I saw what was coming up the path."

"But we want to know that opinion, Julie, if it was so funny that every one had to laugh," demanded Alice Brent curiously.

"Alice, were I to confess that the opinion was of such a light nature that it has floated away from my memory already, you will not insist upon my trying to catch it again, eh?" teased Julie.

"Besides, Alice," added Joan instantly, "you will judge the lightness of the opinion by the feather-

weight brain whence it floated. Do we not know Julie?"

The laugh which had sounded at the expense of the "job lot" just as the two girls reached the house, now turned upon Julie and she sat down a vanquished Leader.

"Girls," called Betty, to attract attention to her words, "We have so much to discuss that we must not waste time in this silly talk."

"Hark! scouts!" added Julie, suddenly serious, or at least she pretended to be so, "my better half speaketh. Since you all know the depth and extent of my twin's intentions, I need not advise you to pay heed to the oracle now holding the platform."

This interruption of her sister's well-meant defense of business matters launched the twins upon one of their amusing attempts to explain to each other just what the other meant. Finally Joan rapped the table and called the meeting to order once more.

"To hear this 'kaffee-klatch' one would think we were present to rehearse a comedy act for the vaudeville stage," was Judith's laughing remark.

"Might as well be comedy for rehearsal as tragedy in a *re*hearse," retorted Joan.

"Then we'll adjourn the business meeting, Scouts, and let the comedians go on with their performance," announced the Captain. This unexpected

result of the girls' jokes and laughter suddenly silenced them.

The rest of the meeting continued without a break from Julie or Joan, and finally it had been voted to divide the entire Vacation Fund into as many portions as there were girl members in Dandelion Troop. But one working fund was to remain intact for Joan and Julie to draw upon for their needs in producing the future work on the manuscripts.

These portions were to be deposited in the bank in the name of each scout, but it was to be held in trust by the Captain. This was a means of protecting every one, and to insure the use of the fund for study, progress or travel. It might be used for art in music, painting, writing, dancing, or for business courses. If the depositor preferred a trade, such as learning the art of millinery, dressmaking, or other womanly virtues she would be permitted to pay for her course out of her individual fund.

The scouts now signed this agreement, and voted Mrs. Vernon the guardian of their bank accounts. This trust was accepted by her, and that was the end of the meeting, but not the end of the afternoon's gathering.

"Julie, the cook notified me that she had received a wireless message this morning to be sure and bake another layer cake for you. I made no demur, so

she has it ready to serve in the dining room. Girls, do you want to see Julie get away with a whole cake?" said the Captain anxiously.

"What?" demanded Joan, "see her do it? Not much, Verny! Not with a score of healthy appetites waiting to appease their craving for cake such as your cook bakes."

So this meeting adjourned to test the merits of cake—chocolate and orange and maplenut cakes being the cause for judgment from these wise judges.

"Oh, I forgot to mention one important item regarding our manuscripts, girls," added Mrs. Vernon, after they were seated in the dining room.

"Don't tell us you have to withdraw any of these cakes," cried Joan, pretending to be fearful.

"No," laughed the Captain reassuringly. "But Gilly said the editors of the magazine and newspaper could not use all the stuff Julie has written. They need about twenty thousand words only."

"But they will pay just the same for all of it, won't they?" demanded Julie.

"Yes, that makes no difference in the price to be paid. But it means that we must go over the copy and select the best parts of the manuscripts."

"Why, Verny," remarked Betty, "How can we do it? Every bit of Julie's stories is so good that we can't tell which is best."

"Well," laughed Julie, nodding her thanks at her

twin, "After that praise, Sister, I must give you my extra helping of cake. That is, if Verny passes another helping."

"Verny, why not submit all the manuscript and tell the editors to choose what they like from the entire story," suggested Joan.

"That is what I was going to suggest, Jo, if Julie had not reminded me how lax I was in hospitality. Hester, will you pass that cake Julie's way, please," said the Captain.

Julie instantly replied: "Can't I persuade you to take my share to oblige me, Betty? No, really? You do not care to overload your stomach, you say? well then, sister mine, I feel that I must do justice to the cook's fine art. Besides, this is the last opportunity we may have to eat such cake. Who knows what we shall be served on ship-board and out in California." So saying, Julie removed a huge slice of cake from the platter to her own plate.

"Now that we have stopped the mouths of the hungry girls," remarked the Captain, "we are free to discourse again."

"Will Gilly come back here with V.?" asked Judith.

"I expect them both on the nine o'clock train tonight," replied Mrs. Vernon.

"We shall feel awfully eager to know the details of his negotiations for us," ventured Anne Bailey.

"And I will promise to relieve your minds tonight, after I find out from them exactly what was done," said Mrs. Vernon. "I'll telephone Julie and Joan, and they can 'phone the rest of you about it."

So the Troop left the Captain's house with eager hearts awaiting the final news from Gilly that night. The Captain had said she would report to them, and she never broke her word.

That evening Julie and Joan sat in their homes smiling happily as they heard the whistle of the nine o'clock express from New York, just where it turns the bend in the road and begins to cross the bridge to pull into the station. They figured that it would need an extra half-hour before Mrs. Vernon could call them to the telephone and deliver her news.

How those thirty minutes dragged for these impatient girls! But time will pass; and then the bell on the telephone instrument tinkled and told Julie that she would have the reward of patience.

To their astonishment the scouts heard that Gilly had been a veritable Shylock in a Samaritan's guise. He had not only sold their stories for an incredible—to the girls it seemed like wholesale graft—price, but he had offered to sell the kodak pictures of various scenes to illustrate the stories. Since the magazine and paper would have to have an illustrator do certain pictures, and the photos were

ready and desirable to use, they paid for the rights of reproducing them.

"Well, well, well!" sighed Julie, for once in her life too amazed to say more.

"Now I am going to telephone Joan the good news, Julie, and let you call up the other scouts and inform them of the result of Gilly's negotiations for us," said Mrs. Vernon. Then saying good-by, she rang off and left Julie silent with joy and surprise.

"For goodness' sake, Julie, tell me what she said?" cried Betty impatiently. Such impatience in the always calm and obliging sister amazed Julie almost as much as the information from the Captain had done.

But she told Betty all about it, then started to ring up her scout-sisters, to share the splendid news with them.

For a week following Gilly's advent to the Elmertown Scout center, there was such bustle and business as mothers and friends never knew before. Mr. Vernon had decided to start and attend the Lumbermen's Convention in San Francisco, and Gilly was determined to travel to California, by way of the Panama Canal. This would take much longer in reaching the Golden Gate, than travelling by rail across the Continent. But the Scouts agreed with Gilly, since they were eager to take the voyage and

pass through the Canal. Everywhere one looked one saw items of apparel for the light baggage which the scouts were advised to limit themselves to.

"We can secure all the extra things we might need at the towns along the route," said Mrs. Vernon. And the girls consented to take but one simple dinner dress, and such necessities as they would need on the steamer.

"Verny says we can buy extra duds at Panama, and any stopping ports along the line," explained Julie, when she saw the array of things Joan had expected to pack and take.

"Gilly won't allow us to burden the party with more luggage than one suit-case each," added Betty.

"Then I shall take Dad's great telescope case for mine!" laughed Joan, but she really meant it and followed her idea in doing so.

One afternoon, just prior to leaving Elmertown, the Captain was told of a plan evolved by the scouts who were not going on this trip. They had decided to spend a few weeks in the old camp-site on the Blue Ridge Mountain, which had launched Dandelion Troop on its career in scoutdom.

"I'm very glad of that, girls," said the Captain. "You need a vacation away from the town. In the camp up on the Ridge, you can rest and receive

higher visions of what you propose to do in your chosen lines of work."

"Even so, Verny, there are some mothers who object to the girls going with us," said one of the scouts.

"Then it proves that we have not educated all the women enough. This Fall we will open another campaign to show our citizenesses what scout work and life really does for us. Until then, we must let them dream in their ignorance."

"If Dandelion Troop ever accomplishes such a Herculean task as winning all the people of Elmertown to approve of our plans, we will be ready to sprout our wings and don a crown and rest up on the fleecy clouds of the sky," laughed Julie.

"Yeh!" scorned Joan comically, "and take a chance of falling through the transparent blue and hit the earth—umph!"

"That reminds me, Captain," added Hester Wynant, after the peal of laughter had subsided, "one old lady, our neighbor, shrugged her shoulders when she heard how much the New York paper had paid us for our stories. And she squeaked forth: 'Did yuh ever see the like of thet! Payin' good hard cash fer sech doin's ez them scouts carried on whiles they wuz gallivantin' over them wild Injun plains. How a decent mother kin let her gals ride bronchos, neck and neck with western rangers,

beats me! It's orful to hear thet them gals goes right outdoors in short knee *pants,* the minit they git west. I ust to think Mrs. Vernon was a lady. Now I hearn tell *she* wears *pants* too. What air we comin' to, I wonder!' "

Hester's perfect mimicry of Elmertown's gossips created a laugh and the Captain joined in, though she felt grieved to know that she and her girls were so misunderstood and wrongly accused.

"Our laundress told mother last week that you were driving me straight to perdition," added Ruth Bentley. "Mother wanted to know why, and the poor thing said it was next to the worst thing a gal could do, to write for newspapers. She thought it was all right for 'them men-folks' to write and print the papers, but it was a 'female-woman's' job, she said, to keep house and mend socks."

"Thank goodness, girls, that we had Verny living in Elmertown in time to save us from becoming gossips in our old age," said Joan fervently, and her hearers said "Thank goodness!"

CHAPTER IV

BETTY'S PRECIOUS PARCEL

At last came the day when Dandelion Troop representatives said their last good-bys to friends and families grouped on the platform of the railroad station and, boarding the train which would convey them to New York City, where they would take the steamer to the Canal, leaned from the windows to wave handkerchiefs as long as they could see their left-behind friends.

Then they settled down to discuss the future trip and to hear Mr. Vernon outline their voyage down the Atlantic Coast.

"I feel so gay and light-hearted that it matters little to me which way we go, so long as we keep on going," laughed Julie, swinging her curly head side to side in imitation of jazz-joys. Her companions laughed with her, and then Joan made a joking reply.

"Your heart evidently is trying to compete with your head, Jule. *That* always was light, you know."

"Likewise my purse!" retorted Julie.

"Well, there is an old saying that all things travel in 'threes'," said Mr. Gilroy.

"This Troop is the exception to prove that rule," added Mr. Vernon. "It seems that every time we travel anywhere we keep adding and adding to the number we have to protect and govern."

This speech called for energetic protests from the girls, who felt that they were fully capable of looking after themselves.

"My only regret in taking this voyage to California via the Panama Canal is the disappointment at not stopping at Havana, or Palm Beach. I'd love to visit the millionaires' winter playground; and see the places which 'Teddy' and our Boys tied up in Cuba, during the Spanish-American war," said Judith.

"Say, folks," called Julie to the others in the party, "haven't you noticed how Jude's mind inevitably turns to wars and their heroes? I really believe that she was an old warrior in a previous incarnation."

They laughed and Judith replied humorously, "I sometimes realize that I must have been Joan of Arc; or, perhaps, Napoleon, or Alexander the Great."

"If you were so famous as all that, Jude, who do you suppose I must have been?" asked Julie laughingly.

"I know!" exclaimed Mr. Gilroy, "you were the

King's Jester all down the line, from an ancient Pharaoh to the present day."

Julie was right there with her retort. "If that is true, Gilly, then you were the Golden Image of ancient Bible lore, which the people fell down and worshipped. You see, it follows you into this life, only Dandelion Scouts are too wise to worship gold."

The coming of the conductor for tickets interrupted this light banter, and all thoughts of theosophy or any other line of metaphysics and occultism fled from the minds of the girls—all but Betty's, and she wondered what Julie and Judith had meant.

"Speaking of the trip down the Coast," Mr. Vernon said, as soon as the conductor had passed them, "we could have traveled by steamer to Florida and then to Havana, and, having stopped at the places you wished to see, resumed the journey across the Gulf of Mexico, and so on by rail across Texas to California. That is the route we had planned to take on our homeward journey last year, you remember."

"Perhaps it will be possible for us to take that return trip this summer," ventured the Captain. "That is one reason I was so insistent upon not signing up for round trip tickets. How do we know what will delay our home-coming, or which way we might wish to travel."

"Or how do we know that Gilly has not plotted with some of his friends in the East to telegraph him this year, as at other times, when we create too heavy a pressure upon his money and patience? An unexpected message generally cuts our adventuring short, you know," remarked Julie.

"That should be a lesson for you to relieve such pressure, and then the season will be concluded happily without a telegram," laughed Mr. Gilroy.

Edith Blake had listened to this light-hearted conversation, while her friends, the Muelbacks, and her mother sat apart in Pullman seats facing each other. It was the first time since she had decided to take her portion of the Vacation Fund to pay expenses in New York for her voice training that Edith felt a deep sense of regret because she had not chosen to go with the Troop. She knew from past tours what a crowding of pleasures and adventures each twenty-four hours held for the scouts, and this trip offered them still more delights than that of any past outing. When she pictured the long voyage down the Atlantic Coast, the visit to the Caribbean port of the Canal Zone, and the wonderful experience of going through the Panama Canal and the week's visit in Panama, then the voyage up the Pacific Coast to San Francisco, she wished she might be given once more the choosing of the two ways of spending her summer; but it was too late,

because all arrangements had been made by Mr. Vernon, even so far as telegraphing ahead to engage rooms at 'Frisco for the time of the Lumbermen's Convention in that city. So now, with a stifled sigh, she resigned herself to the next best prospect—that of enjoying herself with the Muelback girls in New York. Hearing Joan speak of funds she turned to listen.

"It seems incredible to believe that we have so much cash in our Vacation Fund. When you stop to think that all the income in that Fund came from the pleasures and thrills we have had in our past mountaineering, it shows that we have not earned it by the sweat of our brows."

"*You* have not, but that does not say that your ambassador to editors and collectors in New York 'sold you' without having beads of moisture gather upon his noble brow," said Mr. Gilroy.

Mr. Vernon laughed and quickly added: "Girls, don't you believe it. I was there and I can tell you a thing or two!"

"Oh, V., do tell us!" chorused many eager voices. Mr. Gilroy shook a warning index finger at his friend, but this had no effect upon Mr. Vernon. He laughed and turned to explain.

"Immediately after Verny had telephoned me to keep an eye on Gilly that night, in order to keep his attention focussed upon one great thing—that of

selling your material for a story—I had to obey my superior officer, naturally.

"Well, Gilly called up several men, of whom I had heard because of their connections with leading City papers, and invited them to dine with him that evening. It was rather short notice, but the Golden Image dazzled them, even as it had done in past ages. And these men, hoping to boost their Press Importance because of Gilly's boullion, accepted his invitation. I was invited merely because our friend here knew not what else to do with me.

"Well! if you scouts could have heard him wheedle and wile those men,—I suppose a better term for it would be 'intrigue'—into taking your stories; and having done so, he continued to use his hypnotic gifts to attract advance payments from their pockets. I blushed at his temerity in getting all that he had hoped for up to that time, and then he must needs insist upon selling the illustrations as well. That is how your Vacation Fund inflated itself enough to burst the bank,—had you not withdrawn some of the fund in time to save the institution."

The girls had been listening with absorbed attention to Mr. Vernon's story, and just as the narrator finished speaking a surprised cry from Betty and the simultaneous sound of a falling object drew the eyes of her companions to her.

Betty hastily stooped to recover the fallen article, and then the scouts saw that she held an oblong box so securely bound with knotted strings of different colors and weight, as to create a smile on their faces. Suspicious looking grease spots made the fellow-travelers of Betty believe the box had been wrapped in soiled paper by a careless friend.

"What under the sun have you in that box, Betzy?" asked Julie, with a frown, as she saw the wrappings.

"I promised not to tell, Julie," said Betty anxiously. "It is a great secret and something very precious for us. She had to use the only paper we could find, you see, and there was no other cord to be found in the haste of my getting away with you."

"That reminds me:" now said Ruth, and all attention was diverted to her. "When I declared that taking but one suitcase and that one as small as would hold my few necessities, mother almost had a spasm. She gasped: 'Why, Ruthie! it is positively shocking to think of you girls living for months with so few changes.'

"I tried to tell her that there were better shops along the route than we had in Elmertown; and besides that, there could be little need of costumes in the Redwoods' Camp. Stout knickers and shirt-waists were the main thing for camp-life. So here

I am: my inventory proves that I am traveling lighter than ever before."

After this no one gave a thought to Betty's package, nor was any reference made to it during the train ride. Because Mr. Gilroy complimented Ruth on her common sense in limiting her baggage to one case and her wardrobe to mere necessities, the other scouts vied with her in trying to win approval from him; Mr. Gilroy had lost none of his facetiousness in the years the scouts had known him and he kept them giggling during the entire journey to New York.

"Had I known in advance that you girls were really going to travel so light this trip I would have planned the route across Mexico, and so on over the southern part of California, which is a wonderful trip. But I feared the exhaustion of checking so many pieces of luggage; paying duty in and out of Mexico on tons of personal trifles, and then reaching San Francisco in such a prostrated condition that I would have to retire to a sanatorium to recover. That would have ruined your entire tour, since V. is not able to handle such a lot of pretty girls in a State where young men are always on the look-out for sweethearts and wives."

"Oh, Gilly! you foolish man!" exclaimed several girls.

Julie replied for her comrades: "To hear you

speak, one would think our Captain is helpless, where we are concerned."

"Your Captain!" reiterated Mr. Gilroy, "why she is the youngest member in the Troop."

"And the prettiest!" added Mr. Vernon. Instantly the pleased scouts clapped their applause at such opinions; and Mrs. Vernon smiled, as she tried to be heard.

"That is proof conclusive that by living up to the rules and principles of Scoutdom one will soon be rejuvenated in mind, soul and body. I accept the compliment for the Scout Work, but not for personal pride and vanity."

"I'm glad to learn the formulae used for your rejuvenation," returned Mr. Gilroy. "I shall try it faithfully, and see if by so doing I can grow hair on top of my bald pate, and get rid of wrinkles without using those torturing wrinkle plasters every night."

"Ah!" ejaculated Mr. Vernon, "now we know how Gilly keeps his face so smooth and round. I suspected him of using other methods than mere flesh-building food."

The merry laughter at Mr. Gilroy's expense caused other passengers to smile in sympathy, though they heard nothing of that which was spoken by the happy band. Mrs. Vernon caught sight of these smiles and turned to hush her girls. Then she

turned to her husband and Mr. Gilroy and said: "Do try to be sensible and talk of practical things, won't you?"

"Why, Verny!" declared Julie quickly, "you are asking the impossible of them."

A fresh peal of laughter at these words caused the Captain to shake her head despairingly and sink back in her seat. But the long-sustained effervescent conversation throughout the train-ride was soon ended by hearing the brakeman shout from the front door of the coach: "New York! Pennsylvania Station, New York City!"

There now ensued a great bustling and laughing confusion to gather bags and other effects together by their owners and then the Troop filed from the train, following the lead of Mr. Gilroy and Mr. Vernon.

In the great rotunda of the Penn. Station Edith and her mother said good-by to Judith and the others in the Troop, then followed the Muelbacks to the street. The Scouts followed their two guides to the taxi-stands, where they were helped into the cabs and started for the pier of the steamer which was scheduled to sail that day.

The baggage carried by the porters from the train had been piled up beside the drivers of the taxis, regardless of individual ownership. The passengers distributed about in the taxis had little

"Oh, do get that box again?"

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idea of where their suitcases were, other than they knew them to be on one of the cabs engaged by Mr. Gilroy.

Any thought of baggage was ousted now from mind because the Scouts had never seen this section of New York and they gazed intently from the windows as the taxis sped away for the pier. Betty had been crowded inside the cab with so many other girls that one could scarcely breathe, and to move freely was an impossibility. Fortunately, she had placed the package she had held safely back of her feet, and now, as she was completely hidden upon the seat under the laughing, jostling companions who had managed to wedge a way inside the cab, she forgot the box upon the floor.

Betty found that by holding her head well back she could catch glimpses of streets, towering buildings and pedestrians, to say nothing of whirling vehicles driven past the windows, which threatened to collide with their own cab every now and then. By the time the taxis reached the entrance to the pier Betty, as well as her companions, were thankful to find themselves safe and alive and free to get out of the vehicle.

The taxis conveying the other members of Dandelion Troop had arrived already at the entrance to the pier, when the one with Betty and her friends pulled up beside the group standing there. Mr.

Vernon had paid off the drivers and now came over to pay the last one to arrive; meanwhile Mr. Gilroy removed the bags from the last cab, and then turned to assist the passengers to get out.

"Betzy, you'll have to get out before we can budge," said Joan, seeing Julie scramble out and leave her sister free to move.

Betty obediently climbed out and stood watching while the other girls got out. Her interested attention was diverted, however, when Julie called to her.

"Betzy, which suitcase is it that has the kodak? I want to use it before we go on board the steamer. There are some fine snapshots to be gotten here."

Betty went over to show her twin the bag which held the kodak, while Mr. Gilroy paid the driver; and then the taxi started away. A moment later Betty turned and saw the vehicle had gone.

"Oh, Verny! Gilly! the box—the box! I must have the box."

"What box, Betty?" asked the Captain, forgetting the one which had occasioned the jeers of Julie on the train.

Betty clasped her hands as though her very soul was torn over the misfortune of forgetting the package, and she ran and threw herself into Mr. Gilroy's arms, crying: "Gilly! do get that box again. I promised faithfully to hold it in my arms and

never let any one take it from me. Now what shall I do?"

"There! there, Betty, dear! stop crying and worrying. I'll go right after the cabby and bring your box safely back to you," was Mr. Gilroy's comforting assurance. Then he called another taxi and leaped inside, even as he directed the driver to follow the cab which was several blocks ahead and about to turn a corner leading to a side street.

"While you're gone I will marshall the Troop down to the boat," shouted Mr. Vernon after his friend; but it is doubtful if he heard, because the rattle of the wheels and the crying of taxi-men in the parking space was enough to deafen every human ear.

"What under the sun did you have in that box anyway, Betty?" asked Julie, coming over to her sister's side.

"I haven't the faintest idea, Julie," confessed she. "But I promised faithfully not to open it, until after we got on the boat, and now see what I have done."

"Well, tell me then, who made you promise?" continued Julie.

"Dear Miss Pringle, Julie. She stopped me on my way past her cottage, just as we were going to Verny's house to start for the train."

"Miss Pringle! Not the sour old maid?" gasped Julie, in amazement.

"Yes, and just because she melted down at last and presented us with a token of love as her good-by I feel doubly guilty in losing the box."

"Well, don't worry now, Old Dear. Gilly will bring back the precious box with all its grease spots on it. Not a one shall be missing, I can assure you, since no one would think of stealing them."

Mr. Vernon and the Captain started the Troop away from the recent scene of involuntary purloining on the part of the cabman, and they all went down the pier in the direction of the steamer.

Meanwhile Mr. Gilroy had directed the driver of his cab to get the man ahead, even if an officer presented them with a slip for breaking the speed laws. As he spoke, he leaned from the front window in order to make the driver understand clearly how important the matter was.

"You see, Chauffeur, I've got to recover that package and get back to the boat before scheduled sailing time. So it will be to your interests to help me accomplish this job," said Mr. Gilroy, as he pulled his head back and turned to sit down again.

But the cabby turned a sharp corner just then, and Mr. Gilroy, being unprepared for curves and not holding on to anything to balance himself, went headlong into the back of the seat. His hat was

crushed down over his eyes as far as it could possibly go and the crown seemed a part of his scalp.

He managed to regain an upright position again, but it took some maneuvering to force the hat up from his forehead and enable him to see once more. He had just accomplished this dexterous feat, when the cabby slowed up and called to an officer standing on his beat. What he said could not be understood by Mr. Gilroy, for he had been so engaged with his hat.

But he now heard the policeman's whistle blown to signal a comrade at some other station; and the taxi driver half-turned to explain to his "'fare": "I got him to blow, so the cop ahead'll hold up that cab and give us time to ketch up. It's the onny way I see to get your trunk back."

"I didn't say trunk, Cabby," returned Mr. Gilroy. "I said a box."

"Well, ain't a box a trunk? All the h'English folks say 'box' when they mean trunk."

Mr. Gilroy saw that he was dealing with a Cockney and he let it go at that. In a few minutes more, the taxi driver put on the brakes so unexpectedly that the passenger received his second taste of being flung headfirst into nowhere. This time he managed to catch hold of the straps and save his face from going through the front sheet of glass.

Having caught his breath he sat up and saw an

officer about to arrest the taxi-driver whom they had been pursuing. Then Mr. Gilroy stepped from his cab and approached the trio—the first driver, his own driver, and the officer of the law.

"What did he steal, Mister?" asked the officer.

"He got away wid a trunk—er a box—what belongs to this gent," explained the cab-driver for Mr. Gilroy.

At this unmerited condemnation the first driver protested.

"No, no!" now interrupted Mr. Gilroy. "Not his fault at all, but one of the young ladies in my party forgot to take the box which was in the back of the taxi, and the driver left too quickly for us to let him know. That's all."

Then all four started to search for the missing box, and the policeman pulled it from under an old lap-cover. "Is this it?" asked he, holding up the forlorn-looking package to view.

"Yes, that's it," admitted Mr. Gilroy, with a chuckle.

"Good Lor'! Yuh don't mean yuh druv all this way, and willin' to throw away cash on such a bundle?" laughed the first cabby.

"As long as I am using my own cash to fling and you are not losing your's, I cannot see that it is your business," retorted the hitherto amiable Mr. Gilroy, feeling peeved because the box *was* a sorry

looking package for a girl to take on a cruise to the South.

Consequently the first taxi driver got no tip for the trouble of being stopped, but the officer smiled as he was handed a number of fine cigars, and the chasing taxi-driver was ordered to get back to the pier as quickly as possible.

The Dandelion Troop had been sent on board, but Mr. Vernon stood on the pier anxiously consulting his watch, ever and anon turning to look up at the Captain who was about to give the signal to 'heave O!' the gang-plank; and then turn to watch the street whence Mr. Gilroy must appear.

When all but the last shred of hope had been given up by the girls, Mr. Vernon shouted with relief: "Here he comes!"

And so he did. But the cab was not allowed to deliver him beside his waiting friend, so Mr. Gilroy caught up the box, threw the man a bill and hiked, or rather he flew, for the gang-plank. Mr. Vernon crossed and waited for a moment to help his puffing, panting heavy-weight friend over to the deck, then the whistle sounded. "All aboard!" chorused from several throats of the crew, and they were off.

After recovering his breath and composure once more, Mr. Gilroy handed the precious box to Betty. She thanked him most profusely, and then her sister frowned and spoke.

"Now that we are off, you have the right to see what is inside the box. Perhaps Miss Pringle wants you to wear heavy woolen socks during the trip."

"Oh, no! She said it was for *all* of us," explained Betty. So she began to remove the knotted strings, while the entire party grouped itself around her to see the contents of the precious box.

After the outside papers had been removed, there still remained a newspaper wrapper about the box. This was taken off, and then the scouts saw a scrap of manila paper pinned upon the lid of the shoe-box. Upon it was scratched in a cramped hand-writing:

"For hungry mouths. Cause folks say salt-air gives awful appetites."

Finally the lid was removed and inside the box were revealed twelve greasy doughnuts: two were very small, so that really made up for one large one.

"Good gracious!" cried several of the scouts.

"Doughnuts!" gasped the Captain.

"At a cost of nearly twenty cents each, and a cracked valve in my heart," Mr. Gilroy laughed heartily.

Julie picked one up, then she turned it over upon her palm. Finally she tried to take a bite.

"Baked two months ago! Only fit to use for deck-golf?" queried Mr. Vernon laughingly.

"Two months! Why this one must be able to sit up alone," was the scornful reply.

Then everyone had to sample the "dainties," as the Captain called them, and it was decided to throw them over-board.

"Stay!" cried Joan, melodramatically, "Why should we murder the innocent fish? Better do as V. suggested: save them for golf balls."

During the denunciation of the doughnuts no one had noticed Betty's face. Now the Captain saw her big blue eyes filled with tears, and she managed to control a smile, while she said: "Do you think we are heartless recipients of the gift?"

"Oh, I wasn't thinking of that," confessed Betty, dashing her hand across her eyes, "I was so sorry that Miss Pringle had not really mended her mean ways. She always starts something like this against the scouts, and I was so happy to think she was being kind at last. Do you really think she knew these doughnuts were stale and horrid?"

"Know it? Why, Betzy, she must have taken a lot of pains to knot all those different strings together and smear grease over a paper. She knew better than to hand the box to any other than you," snorted Julie. "And that is why she wanted you to keep the gift a secret and wait until we got on board

the boat. Well, some day we'll open her eyes to the meaning of true scout love."

" 'Charity begins at home,' " was all the Captain said.

"What could she have meant?" asked the girls of each other later.

CHAPTER V

STEAMER ACQUAINTANCES

As the steamer got under way and passed quickly down the North River with the outgoing tide, the scouts watched with interest the sky-line of tall buildings, which is one of the sights that has made New York famous. Then Mr. Gilroy pointed out to them the different sky-scrapers: the Woolworth Tower; the Municipal Building; the Equitable Building, Lawyers' Chambers, and others farther downtown near Battery Park.

They now were out on the broad expanse of New York Harbor and approaching the Statue of Liberty. Soon they had passed this, and were off Sandy Hook; then they were leaving that behind and were skirting past the Highlands. And then, before they realized it, they were leaving all sight of land behind and making for the open sea.

"Well," remarked the Captain, turning to leave the rail where the Troop had been standing while watching the panorama of the shore, "we're off for the first lap of our trip."

"Who knows what experiences we shall live

through, before we return to the Atlantic States," added Mr. Vernon.

"You'd better say: who knows what these scouts will return *with!*" teased Mr. Gilroy. "If they cut up as they did last summer, I'm sure I won't interfere, when the boys want to elope with them. I've made an enemy for life, by not helping Sandy kidnap Julie."

"Oh, is that so!" retorted Julie, pursing her rosy lips at her tormentor.

"Perhaps the girls will be delighted to hear that I met some friends on board, when I went to visit the staterooms and see that everything was in order for us," said Mr. Vernon.

"Yes?" "Are they married?" "How old are they, V.?" were the quick responses to his information.

He smiled and was about to explain, when Mr. Gilroy interrupted: "See here, Vernon, I won't have you spoiling my peace of mind so early in the season. Can't you hold back those beaux until we reach Frisco?"

"But, Gilly," said Julie, "You ought to be happy to have some one to escort us about, and pay for ice cream sodas and bridge losses. You just said that you wondered what you might return with, at the end of this tour."

"Well, I know what I will return without, if I

refuse to countenance your going ons," chuckled he. "I came away with a nice plump bank-roll: if I place any obstacle in your pathway of deluding more young men, you will revenge yourself on me by thinning that same roll, eh?"

"That is what results when a middle-aged bachelor invites a Troop of fair maidens to a picnic," laughed Mrs. Vernon.

"Then my proposal would be to let me introduce the girls to the sons and heirs of my associates in the lumber trade. I know those young gallants would be only too pleased to share expenses with Gilly, provided he permitted them to share the society of the scouts," said Mr. Vernon.

"You talk as though we were merchandise offered for sale," laughed Joan.

"Mighty frail goods, I should say," retorted Mr. Gilroy. "Ought to mark you 'Handle with care'—GLASS."

"Not after one sees this muscle," bragged Judith, doubling up her arm to display the bunched muscle of which she was very proud.

"I was not referring to strength or weight or height—but to the inevitable result of a few hours out at sea. Not one of you scouts will be visible after the billows begin their mighty rolling," explained Mr. Gilroy significantly.

"Oh, surely you do not mean that we shall be

seasick?" gasped Betty, a pucker forming between her big blue eyes.

"You won't catch me being sick!" exclaimed Julie.

"Nor me! Nor me either!" chorused several girls.

"Bravo, girls! I was wondering if you'd let Gilly try to frighten you like that," answered the Captain. "Of course he is a weather-beaten old salt that never thinks of *mal de mer,* so he wouldn't miss us much, even if we were to go to bed."

"He'd enjoy himself tremendously meantime in playing deck-golf with those doughnuts," laughed Anne.

"Poor Anne!" sighed Julie, in pretended sympathy. "Wasn't it an awful disappointment, when you found it was impossible to bite into them?" Anne being the self-acknowledged gourmand of the Troop, nodded her head good-naturedly.

By this time the group had reached their row of staterooms and were ushered into them. They were pleasantly surprised at seeing such comfortable beds and bathrooms, because they were not told that Mr. Gilroy and Mr. Vernon had selected the higher priced suites and paid the difference themselves, instead of engaging the cheaper accommodations, which the girls had felt they must choose, since their

fund must not be drawn upon too heavily for the first part of the whole summer's journey.

Now they went from one pretty bit of furnishing to another, calling to each other to come and see the luxury!

"After inspecting the lovely rooms and such comfy beds, Verny, I don't know but it might be a fine opportunity to play off sick and take a long rest," suggested Joan, patting the day-bed in her room.

"You'd never be able to fool any one with that rosy complexion and those round cheeks," laughed Hester. "They'd know that indisposition and you were total strangers."

"Besides, Jo, think of all the fun you'd miss. If Gilly and V. were really speaking the truth about some beaux on board, we ought to be able to have a gay trip all the way to Panama," declared Julie eagerly.

"Anyway," said Betty contemplatively eying the beds, "it won't seem so terrible to be seasick in such nice rooms. Not a bit like that painting over the mantel in Amy's living room at home."

This reference caused a gale of laughter, for every one knew of that gold-framed oil painting.

"Speaking of it," laughed Amy, "reminds me that mother heaved a sigh when she finally decided that I might come with you on this trip. She

glanced up at the scene and said thankfully: 'I'm grateful, Child, that the steamship companies of the present day are so careful of the lives of their passengers. Not a bit like it used to be at the time when this painting was made.'" Amy spoke in her mother's tone of voice, and she acted so well that her hearers laughed merrily.

"Maybe your mother got her only ideas of ocean travel from that horror," remarked Julie.

"Of course she did! until she saw the illustrated booklets that were sent us from New York. Then she said it could not be possible that any company would go to so much trouble and expense for such a short voyage. She studied the music rooms, the library, the card-room and other amusements provided for the passengers; but she refused to believe that there would be deck sports as it stated. She said to me then: 'Amy, you'll find this is all a hoax to get the people to sail with them.' Girls, I made a wonderful bargain with mother at that: she promised to remove that painting of a shipwreck at sea, if I proved to her that these steamers really were as commodious as the pamphlet advertised them to be."

"Getting rid of that blood-curdling picture is a great step upwards for your mother's art education," said Mrs. Vernon who was one of Mrs. Ward's old girlhood friends.

"I would add more than that, Verny," giggled Amy. "I'd say it will improve one's spiritual hopes, to know that that horror is off in an attic corner. Fancy believing in a kind providence, when you sit and gaze at those inky clouds from which frightful darts of lightning are coming and striking the four corners of the globe. And then behold the mountainous billows engulfing the frail little sail-boat, with humans swinging from every inch of rope on the numerous sails, as well as crowded along the rails of the dying schooner."

The laugh which greeted Amy's description of the well-known painting, which for so many years had been a boogieman in Amy's life, now induced Mrs. Vernon to say: "Where ever did she get it, Amy?"

"Mother bid it in at an old country auction, just because the auctioneer declared it to be a 'work of art'. He must have seen that mother was an easy as she was honest and conscientious. She paid an awful price for it—seeing that it was a transfer made upon oil-cloth and not a painting on canvas. The picture framer proved it to us, but mother would have it that it was rare. So there it has hung to warn all of us away from seafaring."

A peal of girlish laughter was hushed by the Captain. "If we create such a disturbance we will surely be thrown over to the sharks."

"Oh, Verny," gasped Betty, "I never knew we had sharks in these waters. I hope nothing happens to any one on this vessel."

"You big silly! You know very well that sharks seldom come as far north as this. Any one would think you were in the primary grades, Betty," was Julie's impatient rejoinder.

"But Verny said so—at least——"

"Do hush! Don't make us the laughing stock of the Troop," Julie almost shouted at her sister.

That evening, with a silvery moon at full shining down upon an eager group of planners, Mr. Vernon spoke of certain details of the trip.

"I think we ought to spend at least a week in the Canal Zone, because there is so much to interest one in the old City of Panama. From there we can take a steamer which stops at every port of note along the coast on its way to San Francisco, or we can take a fast boat direct to Frisco. If we decide upon taking a vessel that makes stops, we had best not remain too long in Panama."

"Our method of getting to California is well established, seeing that we are already on the steamer and there are no stops between here and Cuba. But one thing we scouts have determined upon this summer—that is, to be independent of Gilly's purse and not be dragged back home in the midst of our season," said Julie.

"Exactly!" agreed Joan, winking at her chum; but the Captain saw the sly glance and knew the girls were trying to "Get Gilly's Goat." For once, strange to say, Mr. Gilroy failed to enter into the combat of wits.

"I think we ought to take the stop-over route and see as many points along the Pacific Coast as possible on our way to San Francisco, because we will be too sight-seeing-weary by the time we plan to start homewards," remarked Mrs. Vernon.

"I don't care where you stop along the California coast, just so long as you stop at Los Angeles and give us a chance to do a little sight-seeing there," declared Judith, who was a very attractive and graceful girl.

"Ah, ha!" chuckled Mr. Gilroy, wagging his head wisely, "I understand! Hollywood calls these fair queens to turn into Stars."

"But they have already signed up a contract to take care of me in San Francisco," answered Mr. Vernon.

"You have much to learn about Stars, my poor fellow," was Mr. Gilroy's reply. "One of their habits is to sign a contract only to break it."

"Please don't worry about our not going with you, V." begged Betty now. "We are thinking of those camping parties in the Redwoods all the time.

"But Los Angeles is the Movie City, not a Mountain Camp," said Mr. Gilroy.

"Is that so!" was Julie's cynical reply. "And we will add for your edification, Gilly, that the Panama Canal is a cut filled with water, and not a moraine filled with debris."

Every one laughed, and Mr. Vernon added: "I'm not so sure of that, Jule. When there is a land-slide in the Zone, you'd never know it was anything other than a gully of debris."

The approach of two fine-looking gentlemen accompanied by three good-looking younger men put an end to the banter. Mr. Vernon whispered hastily: "The Hendersons, and Fairfax with his son." Then he got up and hastened to greet his friends. The scouts were all eyes now, and Mr. Gilroy exchanged a smile with the Captain.

The three older men and the three younger ones, having shaken hands, started over to meet the friends of Mr. Vernon.

"My wife, gentlemen," began he, bowing to Mrs. Vernon. The curious girls listened even while they studied the three young gallants, and they felt perfectly satisfied with what they saw.

"Mr. Henderson and his sons, Junior and John, my dear," said Mr. Vernon. The grizzled-haired gentlemen and two tall good-looking chaps acknowledged the introduction; and then their friend

continued: "And this is Mr. Fairfax and his son James—Mrs. Vernon."

Then the introductions proceeded to include the girls and Mr. Gilroy, and finally the summer campaign was launched between the scouts and the beaux. But no one in that group had the slightest idea of what would be the conclusion of that meeting the first night out from New York.

It had become very cold on deck, as the evening advanced, because the chill of winter had not quite changed to the balmy air of early spring, therefore it was agreed to go and seek amusement indoors.

"Like attracts like" and soon the younger element of the party were separated from the more mature members. The men began talking of the Lumber Convention, while the scouts entertained the three admiring young men with accounts of their previous mountain adventures. There was but one "fly in the ointment" of this evening meeting and that was the fact that there were but three gallants and so many girls. How delightful it would be if the Hendersons and Fairfaxes had been more generous with sons, and had provided a handsome young admirer for each girl in the Troop! This not being the case Junior Henderson proposed the next best plan.

"I met a couple of chaps at dinner this evening, girls, and if you have no objection I will find them

and we can have a party. I suppose you all dance?" said he.

"Does a fish swim?" laughed Joan.

"Of course! what a needless question, when I can see for myself that scouts would take to dancing as naturally as the fish takes to water," was Junior's answer. Then he excused himself and hurried away.

In his absence John and Faxy (as he was called by his chums) endeavored to be polite. "This trip promises lots of sport," began Faxy.

"Indeed, yes," agreed John Henderson. "I understand that we have a score or more of prominent lumbermen on board. This will give Dad and Mr. Fairfax ample opportunity to talk shop, and that will please them immensely. Meantime it leaves us free to talk of other things."

A ripple of laughter greeted his remark, because his very expressive eyes suggested what those "other things" might prove to be.

Julie now said: "I didn't know your father and Mr. Fairfax were interested in lumber. Mr. Vernon is."

"Yes; that is how they come to know each other. And we must thank the Convention for this agreeable meeting," said Faxy.

Before the girls could smile an acknowledgment to this compliment they saw Junior coming back

with three other young men and one middle-aged man.

"They're all I could find in a hurry," explained Junior, beginning to introduce them to the scouts. "I thought Mr. Jackson would be pleased to meet the Captain, seeing that he is responsible for the good-conduct of these other boys—Oliver, Schuyler, Baker and Brent." As he spoke he nodded to each individual named and then he felt that he had done his duty.

Mrs. Vernon gave her attention to Mr. Jackson as she had been invited to do by Junior, and the young people began to fully enjoy that first night on board the steamer. The victrola was made to provide dance music and the Troop provided their own pleasure.

Junior Henderson showed his preference for Joan at once, and Faxy offered his time and self to Julie that evening. Judith found young Baker very pleasing, and the other girls discovered the remaining three young men most agreeable. So every one was satisfied with the pairing off,—even Mr. Jackson, but he was not aware that Mrs. Vernon had a husband on board. He had thought her to be a charming widow, from the very fact that she was called "Captain" by the scouts and seemed to give all her attention to them. "Naturally," concluded this bachelor, "she would not be so engrossed with

scoutdom if she had a husband to think of." Now he planned how he would love to make her think of *him!*

Consequently the Captain gleefully entered into the fun of the evening, never dreaming that her sallies and smiles might be construed as "flirting" or even as "being attractive."

The hands of the mantel clock were fast nearing eleven when Mr. Vernon, Mr. Gilroy, and their companions entered the salon. Naturally Mrs. Vernon introduced Mr. Jackson at once. He, poor man, was so surprised at seeing a husband there beside the fair lady he had tried to captivate that evening, that he scarcely recovered his self-possession in time to acknowledge the introduction. Then the dancing couples came up and the entire group were invited by Mr. Gilroy to seek refreshments before parting.

It was a merry party that began saying good-night, and the Scout Captain little dreamed that she had a cut-to-order duty to accomplish that summer, in chaperoning these many lively girls on a trip which offered so many thrilling experiences—beaux being not the least of these.

Julie and Joan shared the same stateroom, and Amy Ward had selected Betty Lee for her roommate. Betty was delighted and sighed as she said: "I'm so glad I won't have to take care of Julie!

She'll have to get Jo to pick up her clothes when she steps out of them; and Jo will have to fix her hair, if I am not there."

Betty's evident relief and satisfaction over the arrangement made the other scouts laugh, because they all knew Julie's unscoutlike weakness of letting Betty do little chores for her. She was wont to excuse herself by saying: "But I have such big things to accomplish. Betty loves doing intimate little duties for others, so let her enjoy herself."

Then the Captain would answer: "A scout never forgets the little things, as well as the more important big things in a day's work."

As soon as Julie and Joan found themselves alone in their room, Joan exclaimed in a subdued tone: "Oh, Jule! isn't Junior Henderson just splendid! I think it is wonderful that we should meet so many dandy chaps on this voyage."

Julie smiled wisely. "Now you understand how *I* felt last summer when Sandy appeared on the horizon with his delightful companionship. There is this difference, however: Sandy was a very valuable young man to know, because he was right there with all the facts we wished to get about Pueblos, Mesas, and other wonders in New Mexico."

"The greatest wonder to me was that you were

not head over heels in love with him. Such a fine figure as he presented in his Forest Ranger's uniform," said Joan.

"Well, I might have to say the same to you after this summer ends: how can any one resist the charm of Junior, with his perfect evening clothes and the grace with which he dances?"

"Don't be foolish, Jule! you know as well as I do that we are merely relieved to have a few new beaux to attend us for a time!"

"Maybe it will not be a short time," hinted Julie. "Faxy tells me that not only his father, but Henderson Senior as well, have shipped their cars on the boat, and they propose extending the visit in California for the entire season."

"No, really!" cried Joan, clasping her hands in delight. "How I wish Verny would invite them to accompany us to the Redwoods. Wouldn't it be fun?"

"Not for Verny—for us, perhaps," laughed Julie. "Besides it must seem queer to the rest of our Troop, to have you ask such a favor of the Captain. Remember you have only known Junior one night."

"Naturally there has to be the first time always," retorted Joan.

"Yes, but you certainly made astounding progress for 'first time.' Perhaps the Troop will

have to take you back home in the Fall, with a prize package," teased Julie.

"Don't talk nonsense, Jule! Did I talk like this to you, when Sandy was forever dangling at your heels?" demanded Joan.

"No," laughed Julie, "you were a good little girl, and I'll try to do as much for you this season."

Then the two chums sat upon the edge of the bed and enjoyed several confidential matters concerning each other and their new admirers. Julie informed Joan that the Fairfaxes were worth a heap of money back in Boston; and Joan told Julie that the Hendersons owned one of the largest lumber mills near Niagara. Since Mr. Vernon knew them so well it was a guarantee for them, and the girls felt free to enjoy the company of the sons of V.'s friends.

The following morning found the eager scouts up early and ready for any suggestion for a good time. The young gallants, their number augmented by the addition of two more young men, seemed only too pleased to escort the girls about. Shuffle-board, deck-golf, and other sports were enjoyed to the full. Then some of the party sauntered to the music room, and some to the library or card-room, to pass the rest of the time till luncheon.

Mr. Gilroy, standing with the Captain, watching the group in the music-room, laughingly remarked:

"I wonder how the girls manage to find plenty of admirers wherever they go? Who would have dreamed that here on ship-board these scouts would draw a group of handsome young beaux, before the first evening was over?"

Mrs. Vernon smiled and replied: "How do bees know where to find the sweets of flowers? Place a jar of molasses on the pantry shelf and watch the countless ants that will discover it by some subtle, secret, radio message."

"You doubtless feel relieved, Verny, to realize that there is safety in numbers. Besides neither couple can run away or get far from your eagle eye, since they'd have to jump into the sea and swim, if they tried to elope or evade you," laughed Mr. Gilroy.

"Gilly, I'm not a bit concerned about such matters, for I know my girls too well to fear any small thought or action."

"I stand reproved, Captain!" declared her companion, removing his cap and bowing. "I know that, but I spoke jocularly."

Friendships ripen quickly during a voyage, and the list of passengers on the steamer plying her way swiftly southward, had many things in common; hence they all formed a sociable circle. The mornings' sports; then the deck promenades or lounging in chairs; then luncheon hour, followed by an after-

noon of pleasure; and dinner followed by dancing or music or other pleasant pastimes, made the time flee all too quickly for the scouts.

Before the vessel had passed the Florida Coast, where the Millionaires' Playground—Palm Beach and Miami—was located, the Dandelion Troop of scouts had admitted as honorable members and for temporary convenience, several outside applicants. Not only Faxy and Junior and John clamored to be included as members of the Troop for the time being, but their elders demanded the right to join the Scout Party during the visit in California.

"I hope you do not expect me to be Captain for all of you, do you?" demanded Mrs. Vernon, aghast at such an idea.

"No, but we agree to share the responsibilities you might have to assume in permitting a number of young chaps to include themselves in the membership of the Troop," laughed Mrs. Fairfax.

"Who ever heard of a Troop of Girl Scouts allowing any boys to become members of their organization?" wondered Betty. Her perplexity over this strange problem made her friends laugh heartily.

"It all depends on the status of the applicants," said her sister. "It would be quite appropriate if such boys accepted the Captain as their guide and ruler for a time, agreeing to become her slaveys in-

stead of individual, independent members of the Troop."

That evening Mrs. Vernon missed Joan and Junior and, having sought everywhere for a glimpse of the couple, felt rather annoyed at this departure from the usual rules of the Troop.

"Where do you suppose they can be?" she asked of her two comrades, Mr. Gilroy and Mr. Vernon.

"I haven't a doubt that Jo and Junior are planning to get a license the moment the ship touches port in Panama," said Mr. Gilroy, trying to be serious, while his eyes twinkled with mirth.

"Don't joke over this, Gilly," begged the Captain. "I can see just how poor Junior might think too much of Joan."

"Didn't Julie do the same to poor Sandy last year? He still writes regularly, but she seldom mentions a broken heart, eh?" suggested Mr. Gilroy.

"My dear," added Mr. Vernon, "you seem to forget how many broken hearts you could count when you were the age of these girls. I am not likely to forget, however, because I was one of the smitten youths. I believe you said something about 'being young but once', and you considered that that was sufficient reason for not entering into a bond with me."

"But I did, after all, didn't I?" was Mrs. Vernon's instant reply.

"Of course, that goes without saying, seeing that it was such a splendid opportunity that presented itself to you," laughed Mr. Gilroy.

"No, Gilly, that is not the reason I cancelled my liberty," teased Mrs. Vernon, glancing at her husband with an expression Mr. Gilroy envied for his friend; "I had to marry him to end his nagging. I never had a day's peace and quiet, once he met me."

"Don't you believe such tales about me, Gilly!" protested Mr. Vernon. "I am too polite to tell you how this girl tried to dazzle me with her charms. If you only had had a like experience you would understand and sympathize with me now."

At this moment the Hendersons came up, and Mrs. Henderson remarked with an amused manner: "We just passed two steamer chairs almost hidden by the great funnels. Had we not caught the sound of Junior's murmuring voice we would never have known who occupied the chairs."

"There now! that accounts for Joan," declared Mrs. Vernon; "But where is Julie and Faxy?"

"You'll find them sitting in the shadows cast by another giant funnel," quickly came from Mr. Henderson. "These funnels seem to provide very nice places for confidential chats."

The group of mature friends now went to the music room, to listen to a singer who was going to render several solos that evening. Mrs. Vernon

felt it her duty to stop beside Joan and Junior, to let them know where she was to be found thereafter, and then she sought out Julie and Faxy and told them the same thing. Feeling that she had done her duty as a chaperon, without being too much of a polly-pry with the girls, she went on to the music room.

That night Joan had a great surprise for Julie. After they had said good-night to the other girls and closed the door of their stateroom, Joan said: "Jule! *what* do you think I learned tonight?"

"That Junior cannot possibly live without you?" laughed her friend.

"No, indeed! It's about you, Jule!"

"About me! Why, what can it be? How did you find out?"

"From Junior, and he heard it from Faxy. Did you know that Sandy is cousin to Faxy?"

"No!" gasped Julie, so astounded that her chum laughed.

"It's true; but Faxy isn't going to tell you, for fear you might turn a cold shoulder on him. Junior told me not to mention it, but I would not promise anything."

"Well, well! can you beat that for coincidence?" murmured Julie.

"Faxy's mother and Sandy's mother were sisters.

But one went west, to Denver, to live; and the other remained in the east."

"Thank goodness I never mentioned Sandy's name to Faxy," was Julie's heartfelt sigh.

"Did Faxy never speak of a Forest Ranger whom he knew in the west?" asked Joan.

"Yes, he did, but I never dreamed it could mean Sandy. Now that I think of it, Jo, he mentioned how this dandy chap toured the Southwest last summer and had the time of his young life with a group of girls."

"Now that you know, you can be on your guard," was all Joan added. And her friend nodded her head and smiled.

After a period of silence, necessary because of cold cream and other toilet work being accomplished with two round, rosy faces, Julie said: "I may as well tell you, Jo, that Faxy seemed very much impressed by the story his cousin told him, of the girl he had met. Seeing that *I* was the girl referred to in that story, I can enjoy the narrative all the more. It is great to hear all about yourself from another's view-point, when that other has no idea that he is talking of you."

"U—m—m!" agreed Joan, but her face was still smeared with cleansing cream, and that was all she could say at the time.

CHAPTER VI

WHAT HAPPENED AT PANAMA

BEFORE the steamer sighted Cuba, every passenger on board had taken such personal interest in the Dandelion Troop of Scouts, that it was more to grant urgent requests than to make any money that the girls agreed to give an entertainment of scout work.

The Captain of the vessel had the notice posted upon the bulletin board, and to the astonishment of the Troop, they read that a charge of one dollar for each seat would be made. A notice in smaller type at the foot of the bulletin explained about the Scout Drive for a permanent fund.

"I wonder who is responsible for the charge?" said Joan angrily.

"It is a good stroke of business," replied Mr. Gilroy.

"You did it, didn't you?" demanded a chorus of voices.

"No, I did *not!*" laughed Mr. Gilroy, only too glad to be able to make such a statement.

"But you know who did?" continued Julie, watching his expression closely.

"Yes, I know, but I shall not tell—not if you put me on the torture wheel."

"Seeing it has been done, let it go at that," commented Mr. Vernon. But the girls never knew that *he* had posted the notice.

"Girls, V. will give his services freely, if you say so, in selling the tickets at the door. And I will stand porter and take them up, in order to prevent any one from getting in without paying," said Mr. Gilroy.

"Pooh! you both offer to help us just so you can see all you like without buying a ticket," declared Julie.

"There now, Gilly! I told you she'd get your number if you tried that stunt," laughed Mr. Vernon.

"Who dares to say I would stoop to such a trick?"

"I bet you used to crawl under the canvas flap of a circus tent when you were younger, in order to save your money," added Joan jestingly.

"You've said it, Jo!" exclaimed Mr. Vernon. "But he can't do that now—not until he does a daily dozen for a year and reduces a hundredweight."

"Just to hush your mouths and make you feel ashamed of your false accusations I'm going to hand the Captain five dollars right now for five

tickets," declared Mr. Gilroy, stripping a bill from a roll he had taken from his pocket.

"Doesn't that show that he needs five seats for himself, girls?" Mr. Vernon asked of the scouts.

Mr. Gilroy was always preaching about methods of reducing and the scouts were always teasing him about fasting more and exercising more. The last remark, therefore, caused a laugh at his expense.

"Do you girls promise to refund money if the show is no good?" demanded a new-comer to the circle. It was Junior.

"There is no question of such a thing as it being bad," retorted Joan. "But we may decide to keep our best stunts for a side show, to be given after the main performance."

During the laugh which greeted this remark, Julie said: "You see, then, that we are splendid financiers and circus managers."

"It remains to be seen if you are good performers as well," murmured Junior, hoping to start a lively argument with the scouts.

That day the boys went about canvassing tickets for the Scout Demonstration, to be given that evening, and, in many cases, securing as much as five dollars for a seat.

The result of the entertainment given by Dandelion Troop was surprising to both sides: the performers and the audience. The first because of the

total receipts taken in for the seats, and the second for the interesting things which Girl Scouts learn to do, of which most of the members in the audience had never known before.

As an extra "show," for which Julie's threat of charging double pay was not carried out, the audience were treated to a story of Julie and Joan's thrilling adventure in the canoe, down the rapids, and the way they were saved from going over the Falls, on that memorable trip in the Rockies. Julie, being the prize story-teller of the Troop, gave such a vivid description of the experience that every one in the audience gasped when she told how she slid from the top of that cliff and fell—fell into the roaring torrent below. In this tense moment, when all were clutching the arms of their chairs or gasping audibly in the excitement of the escape, Julie suddenly broke the spell by telling what she struck in the river. Naturally the unexpected ending of the tale released the spring and a roar of laughter echoed through the salon.

Joan did some lightning sketches for the audience and the other scouts added their quota of talented entertaining. Because of Julie's thrilling story Faxy realized that he had met the very Girl Scouts of whom Sandy had written such glowing accounts. This was something of which he could write and surprise his cousin Sandy. He smiled

to himself as he thought of all Sandy would say in reply to his letter.

That night the steamer arrived at its port in Cuba and the following day it continued its course and stopped at Jamaica. The scouts and their friends were no exceptions to the common rule of tourists on these trips, and so they had nothing more than the usual incidents to relate in regard to these visits. From Kingston the boat crossed the Caribbean Sea and made straight for the Canal.

The passengers spent most of the time on deck now, since the temperature had become so balmy and delightful. The steamer churned her way through sapphire waves and eventually arrived at Cristobal, better known as Colon. Here she anchored and her living cargo disembarked.

The scouts were expecting wonderful scenes at the Canal, but they were not prepared for the actual marvels made by the ingenuity of man. At Colon many of the friends made on ship-board said good-by to the Troop of scouts, to go their own way while the girls went theirs. The Hendersons and Fairfaxes remained with the scout party, however, and this seemed to please everyone concerned.

It had been decided while on board the steamer that the trip through the Canal should be taken during daylight. This would afford the girls the best opportunity of viewing the gigantic feat of

engineering shown in this impressive "cut." Consequently no time was lost in loitering at Colon; but the two men, Mr. Gilroy and Mr. Vernon, marshalled their company to the steamer which would soon depart for Panama.

The scouts stationed themselves at selected places along the sides of the deck of the boat and paid strict attention to all that would enlighten them while passing through the cut.

"Do we pass through Gatun lock first, Verny?" asked Joan, of Mrs. Vernon, soon after the boat left its dock at Cristobal.

"Yes, girls," replied the Captain. "We shall be lifted up 85 feet in order to reach the level of Gatun Lake. Just fancy seeing this enormous craft with all on board hoisted up by the power of water to that height!"

"Well, you see," added Mr. Gilroy, "we actually cross the famous Continental Divide, when we pass from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans. Having spent the summer in the Rockies, and having crossed the Great Divide there, you will now appreciate this way of getting over the hump of the great mountain range in a *ship!* The place which crosses,—or to be more definite in our terms, where we go *through*—the Divide is called Gaillard Cut. On the Atlantic slope of the Divide the Canal fol-

lows the Chagres River; on the Pacific side of it we go down the valley of the Rio Grande."

The entire Troop and its auxiliary members now became silent and interested in watching the steamer enter the lock. Mr. Vernon mentioned several points of information, which made the passage more interesting to the girls.

"This lock was made by constructing a long, broad dam across the Valley of the Chagres. To accomplish this feat of masonary two spurs were built, each coming from the sides of a marshy area and extending to a central point where there was a solid elevation of land. Here the spurs met, and formed a dam, which is half a mile wide at its base, and sloping gradually upwards to its top, which is about a thousand feet wide."

The experience of having a mighty vessel upon which one feels dependent for safety in crossing the Canal lifted up, up, and up, with massive concrete walls appearing to engulf one on all sides, proved to be a thriller for Dandelion scouts. Mrs. Vernon smiled as she noted how several of them clung with a tense hold to the rail in front of them; others unconsciously lifted their shoulders with the mental desire to help in the hoisting of their craft. And all were unmindful of bated breaths, which were a natural outcome of the stupendous undertaking now witnessed by the visitors.

At last the Lock was filled and the vessel was on a level with Gatun Lake. Mr. Gilroy then played the part of Guide.

"Gatun Lake is the largest artificial lake in the world, girls. It is 163.38 miles square—that is in extent—and from 500 to 1,000 feet wide at different points. Miraflores Lake, which really connects Pedro Miguel Lock with the Miraflores Locks, a distance of about a mile in length, has an area of 1.60 square miles."

Joan turned to the speaker and remarked to all present: "What *would* we do without our official guide-book? All he needs, to complete his disguise, is a megaphone such as they used on the sight-seeing buses at Santiago and Kingston."

"Yes," added Julie, "like most official announcers of such ready-made touring parties, he merely states data which we learned at grammar school."

"I was not aware that you considered yourselves a ready-made party," retorted Mr. Gilroy. "It seemed to me that it was a made-to-order Troop. That is one reason for my agreeing to hire out my services as Instructor to you. I could have been paid a much higher salary had I chosen to travel for Cook."

"But you'd never have been retained by anyone as a cook!" laughed Joan.

"Do stop that nonsensical chaffing, folks!" called

Mrs. Vernon; "and concentrate upon this marvelous voyage through the Cut."

"That's what I say, Captain," added Judith. "One can talk at any time and at any place, but we can have such an experience as this crossing but once in a life-time. A second, or third, or more trips becomes common-place."

Consequently Julie and Joan, and their usual adversary, Mr. Gilroy, were hushed and thereafter paid attention to their environment.

After crossing Gaillard Cut, they entered the Pedro Miguel Locks, with their drop of 55 feet. While the waters were running out of these locks, in order to lower the vessel to the next level, Ruth laughed and made an apt remark.

"It reminds me of the old nursery ditty: 'Now we go up, and then we go down.'"

"Yes, and to our childish ideas of height and breadth, that swinging up and down seemed just as thrilling then, as these ups and downs of the Canal and its locks do now," said Anne Bailey.

"That proves how we have advanced in life," added Judith. "Swinging upon Daddy's foot in childhood, to swinging over the Divide on a vessel in the Canal, shows progress."

The Miraflores locks now followed the Lake level, and the steamer, being lowered to the level of the Pacific Ocean, soon made its way for the re-

mainder of the voyage, a distance of about fifty miles, and completed its run at Balboa.

The entire party had planned to remain at the old City of Panama for a short stay, before continuing on the last lap of the journey on a steamer sailing from Panama to San Francisco.

"I'm glad that we started from home in ample time to enjoy a week in this ancient Spanish city," said Mrs. Vernon, as the tourists were driven to a luxurious hotel, where reservations had been made beforehand.

The scouts were surprised to find how modern ideas and improvements had stolen into the aged city, to vie with romance and relics of the past. Spanish customs as well as Spanish speech were the rule, and the visitors smiled in anticipation of all they would be able to see and enjoy during their visit.

"I'm just pining to see a Spanish senorita with a black lace mantilla draped over her ebon hair, smiling up into the dark eyes of her cavalier," ventured Betty, who doubtless had read many romances of Old Spain.

Her friends laughed, and Julie said: "Then you're going to be dreadfully disappointed, Betzy dear. Present-day senoritas are the same everywhere. You'll see the girls of Panama doing the flapper step because their skirts are too tight, and in place

of ebon locks you'll see bobbed hair. Tourists are responsible for the loss of ancient customs and costumes."

"But you will be able to see places which remind you of olden times," added Mr. Gilroy. "This will have to satisfy us now."

The first day in Panama was given to sightseeing and the necessary shopping by the female portion of the party. The males went to inspect a golf-course, which was graciously offered for their entertainment by the hotel manager.

That evening the young folks paired off in couples and, chaperoned by the elders, started on a tour of the city by moonlight. As had become the usual thing during the past week, Julie walked with Faxy, and Joan selected Junior as an escort. They were the last couples in the line, and as they proceeded around the old city they lagged behind and became separated from the rest of their Troop.

Thus they came to an intersection of streets, which wind and twist and turn upon themselves, until one is completely confused in ideas of location or place. At one secluded nook of this crooked intersection stood a quaint Spanish type of dwelling. It must have dated as far back as the origin of the old city. It seemed to be crumbling to pieces, but here and there splotches of new plaster and masonry offered support to its tottering walls. It

had narrow windows, many tiny balconies, and a tiled roof topped by a fanciful cupola.

"What a dear house!" cried Joan, her artistic sense being impressed by the old relic of former grandeur.

"There's a sign at the side of its entrance door. Let's go across and see what it says," suggested Julie, taking Faxy's arm and pulling him along beside her.

The four young tourists reached the house and could just make out the notice written upon the board. Junior was an excellent reader and linguist and he interpreted the writing.

"Senor Carlo Miguel. Crystal Gazer and Seer. Spanish Gypsy." In smaller letters under this announcement were given the hours the seer might be consulted.

"Why, we are just that time now!" exclaimed Julie eagerly.

"Oh! do let's go in and see what he is like," added Joan.

"You really do not believe in such stuff as fortune telling, do you?" asked Junior, laughing at the evident eagerness of the two scouts.

"Oh, goodness, no! but it is lots of fun to hear what they have to say. At the last circus in Elmertown we had a gypsy palmist, who read our hands. She told us girls that we were about to take a long

journey to the land of the golden sunshine. That we would there meet with a proposal. If we said 'yes' much good and money would reward us. Now what do you say to that?" demanded Joan.

"I should say that it is the same old phrase that is the stock-in-trade of all of them," laughed Faxy.

"But we will go in, girls, and see what this old jibbo has to tell us," was Junior's remark, as he reached up and rapped with the antique knocker.

After a time the heavy old door was carefully opened by an unseen hand from within. When a narrow aperture had been made, a white-haired head appeared and a wrinkled face screwed up its eyes and blinked out at the quartette. Then a quavering voice said in pure Castilian: "Enter, friends."

The door was then opened wide enough to allow the visitors to enter a dark and musty hall. Not one object could be seen distinctly, but a flickering candle at the extreme end of the corridor beckoned for them to come that way, and the aged servitor led the way.

They had to stumble up a flight of three steps to reach a waiting-room, octagon shaped and decorated in many strange ways of adornment. Overhead hung a lamp which was so dimmed by an old Moorish shade as to give little light to the room. Stuffed birds, reptiles, and several charts and maps on occultism were seen.

Julie gasped, then sat down suddenly upon an old Spanish leather-seated chair beside her.

"Guess what!" breathed she, with a sudden thrill of remembrance. "Jo, it is the very counterpart of the room I saw in my dream, that night we jostled from the trail in the Rockies to reach a camp-site before night. Do you remember that queer dream?"

"Indeed I do, Jule! Supposing the old seer is like the necromancer you met in that tower?" said Joan.

"Then I would have to say that there is more to this business than we have any idea of. That would put to flight all hints that it is foolish fortune telling," returned Julie.

At this moment the curtains at one side of the octagon room parted and a low voice called: "The one who just spoke—come in!"

Trembling with a thrill of expectation Julie nodded at her friends and passed back of the portierres. A door was closed and the three waiting in the octagon room wondered what was being said to their comrade in the other room.

Julie entered the presence of a stooped old man with a long straggling beard and piercing black eyes. He wore a black silk skull-cap and he used a twisted stick upon which he leaned heavily as he crossed the small cleared space leading to his seat beside the shining sphere of crystal. He motioned his visitor

to the other seat beside him and then he began his character reading.

To Julie this was all very remarkable, for she had never before met one who had the clairvoyant gift developed and demonstrated so carefully as this one. Therefore she listened with awe, while he read many interesting things as he *said* he saw them shown in the crystal globe.

By the time she left the room, she was ready to place faith in any and all seers, be they fakirs, so-called mediums, or genuine seers with a gift of vision—of which there are very few known to the public, since prophets use their spiritual talents for the work of redemption and not for the hoarding of money.

Joan was the next one to be called in to interview the gypsy, and Julie told her comrades some of the things she had been told. "One queer thing he said, remains to be seen," concluded she. "He said a friend uniformed in green would shortly come to a land west of his present abode, and this friend, closely connected by family ties to one with me at present, would be stationed in a mountain range south of the famous forests I was about to visit."

Faxy stared, then smiled and explained. "I bet you that that wise old fellow is a clever mind-reader. You know, of course, that any one can develop the

art of reading mortal mind as easily as we can read Greek, or get the answer to a problem in algebra."

"But, Faxy," argued Julie, "to read my mind one must have that message held in mind. Now I have a suspicion that he referred to Sandy, when he mentioned the friend uniformed in green, but it remains to be seen whether Sandy is sent to any mountain range in California—south of the Redwoods, where we expect to camp."

"That's exactly what I wish to explain now, Julie," added Faxy. "I left a forwarding address for letters to be mailed to the Hotel in Panama, where Dad had engaged rooms. This evening, before coming out with you I was handed a letter written by Sandy and sent to my home address. Naturally it was forwarded with the other mail. In this letter Sandy wrote that he was being transferred for a few weeks to the San Bernardino Range of mountains in southern California, to teach a squad of newly enlisted rangers. That gypsy not only got this thought, of which I have been thinking and planning to tell you, from my own thinking, but he was clever enough to tell it to you before I got a chance to speak of it."

But Julie had no desire to have her faith shaken in the old gypsy, and so she shook her head and smiled a knowing smile.

After Joan came forth again, the two boys protested against being "read," but they were overruled by the two girls, so they agreed upon one condition only—that they both enter the room together. This was a violation of the old man's rules and he promptly refused to see either one of them after that. This concluded the interview rather suddenly, and the four were ushered out of the house.

That night after the four seekers of the occult met the other members of the Troop at the hotel, Julie and Joan held the place of speakers to the group. They described the owls and snakes; the antique vessels sending up wisps of incense; the dim lights and the strange rooms which so resembled the dream that Julie had had during the summer in the Rockies; and above all, the wonderful revelations given by the old seer. By the time they had finished their story every girl in the Troop was determined to find that old mansion and visit the gypsy.

In spite of the laughter from the men of the party, and the advice from the Captain, that the girls remain away from such uncanny places and experiences, the remaining scouts of the party asked the hotel clerk for the address of the crystal gazer. Thus it happened that they went in a body the following morning to hear all about themselves. Even Julie and Joan returned for the second time, and

Mrs. Vernon went to chaperon them to the place, though she protested all the way.

The men plus the cavaliers of the Troop, started for a good game of golf. Since eighteen holes would consume the morning they decided to employ the time in that manly and flesh-reducing sport.

That evening at dinner the men had to listen while the eager scouts told how the seer practised his arts. Betty had refused at the last moment to go in to hear about herself, so she and Mrs. Vernon were the only members of the party that had nothing to say in the general chorus of voices which related the sooth-sayings.

"You know," said Judith laughing, as she related her own experience with the gypsy, "when he fixed his gimlet eyes upon mine and mumbled incoherently for a time, I was frightened stiff. Then he passed his bony fingers over the crystal as though he were giving it a powerful treatment, or incantation. I was so engaged in watching what he was doing, that I leaned forward unconsciously. Suddenly he pointed his scraggy index right in my face and shrilled something.

"Folks! I'm telling you the truth, when I say that I went right over backwards, and would have rolled off the chair upon the floor had not a crazy old cabinet stood back of me and held me up."

A peal of laughter greeted this confession from Judith, and they all begged her to tell what she had heard from the gypsy.

"Nothing! that's the worst of it. He said I was too opaque to read. Think of that, friends: Judith so opaque that even a wise old Spanish gypsy failed to see through her. Am I to feel vain because of such flattery?"

Judith's funny expression made Mr. Gilroy retort: "You've said it, Jude! subtle is not strong enough for such flattery. But it rings like the truth, because you were too calm and self-possessed to let others peep into your mind."

"That's one blessing then that the Science of Mind has poured out upon its students," declared Mrs. Vernon emphatically. "One learns how to lock his own self in the Closet where no one—no snare or fowler—can get at their innermost consciousness."

"It cost me two dollars out of my spending money for this entire summer to be told that I had a blonde sister now in a distant city. But I was told that she had no voice fit to train—that I had it," concluded Judith, wagging her head wisely, as if to suggest that this was no news to her.

"And the old rascal never told me a thing about a beau or a possible husband," declared Amy Ward. "That was all I wished to hear about, and he never

as much as hinted that I might have an admirer some day in the dim future years."

The Captain now said it was time for all to dress for luncheon, because it had been agreed to visit Taboga Island Beach that afternoon and enjoy the bathing.

Thus a week passed quickly by for the delighted Troop. With excursions to the interesting places within motoring distances of Panama; with visits to ancient ruins and cathedrals, or dining in unique cafes, and listening to soft music at night, the tourists finally realized that it was time to resume their voyage up the Californian Coast.

CHAPTER VII

AT LAST: THE GOLDEN GATE

Days dawned, and days faded, while the steamer following the route of the Pacific Steamship Line, carried a Troop of merry and pleased scouts northward to the first port. They had passed the palm-fringed coast of Central America, and had had a hazy view of the shores of Mexico and the southern peninsula of California and now they were arriving at San Diego, the Beautiful Saint City.

The members of the Lumbermen's Organization, which was soon to open its Convention in San Francisco, positively refused to take advantage of the stop-over privileges allowed on their tickets; they said it was imperative for them to reach San Francisco at a certain date, or miss the very object which had brought them west.

"If you young people wish to visit San Diego, or other cities along the route, we will go on and you can follow," suggested Mr. Vernon.

"Oh, no! we are all going as a Troop!" declared Julie.

"We can visit these places on our homeward trip, when the Convention is over," added Joan.

Therefore the entire party, now classified under the one title—Troop—continued the voyage northward after the steamer had ended its visit at San Diego and started for its next port.

The following day they reached Los Angeles. Passengers were notified that a whole day would be given those who wished to go ashore and see the city; but all would have to be on board again by seven that evening, if they planned to travel to San Francisco on that vessel that trip.

The Troop quickly took advantage of the permission to go ashore, consequently they were soon being helped into waiting automobiles and driven about the city. Having "done up" the town, as the boys said, they all went to a popular restaurant to have a late luncheon. At this place, as is common with most dining places, an orchestra played dance music, and a section of the large dining room had been roped off for those diners who might like to enjoy a dance.

Mr. Gilroy established his large party at a row of tables at one side of the place, and then he proceeded to give orders. The scouts were more interested in gazing around the vast hall and in watching the dancers, than they were in what might be ordered for their luncheon.

The three young men found plenty to engage their attention likewise, since there were bevies of

pretty girls with their escorts seated at the small tables, here and there, under giant palms.

Suddenly Faxy started upright in his chair and nodded energetically to a group of young men seated about a circular table.

"Good gracious, Faxy," cried Julie in a voice of disappointment, "is it Sandy?"

"No," laughed Faxy, reassuringly, "you will not have to render an account of your heart so early in the season, Jule. But I recognise an ald college chum of mine. If you will excuse me, I'll go over and bring him here."

"Oh, do!" chorused those scouts, who had had no personal comrade since the steamer, in touching at Colon, had carried away on its continued voyage, those young men on board. Faxy, Junior and John being the acknowledged gallants of Julie, Joan and Judith, the other girls felt thrilled at the idea of annexing new beaux. Consequently they all watched Faxy intently, while he greeted a very handsome young man, and then was introduced to four companions.

"Dear me!" sighed Hester, "I only wish they would *all* come over and join us. What fun we could have, with such divine music for dancing."

"Here they come! Faxy must have read your mind, just like the old gypsy did at Panama," exclaimed Joan.

A few moments later Faxy was introducing Rex Hamilton, a well-known screen star. The scouts were too surprised and pleased to realize that they were face to face with a *reel* hero and about to entertain him, to pay much attention to the three companions with him. It was the Captain, as usual, who caused them to correct this oversight of the new-comers to the circle.

"Captain," called Faxy, from the far end of the long table, which the head waiter had obligingly prepared by shoving several smaller tables close to each other, "Rex has invited us all to go to Hollywood with him and visit Mushroom City this afternoon. He says we can get back in ample time to go on board the steamer before the time expires."

"Oh, Verny!" cried a number of girlish voices, in a very noticeable tone of eagerness.

"Let's go!" declared Julie, without waiting for the decision of the Captain.

"We may as well eat lunch first," was Mr. Gilroy's calm reminder. "It must be paid for, whether you eat or not, so you had better take time enough to eat."

"And during the waits between courses we can have a little jazzing," said Rex, swinging his head, to keep time with the rhythm of the stringed instruments.

"Come on, girls!" called Junior, jumping up

from his seat and catching hold of Joan's arm. "Let's twinkle our feet while our older pals are enjoying their soup. Who wants soup, when one can dance?"

Thereupon the scouts followed his lead and were soon being whirled around in the lively dance which the musicians were playing. Thereafter, between alternate dances and luncheon courses, the group of scouts, their numbers increased by the Hollywood Stars, thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

Then Rex hailed Faxy and told him to conduct his Troop out to the parking space, where the Hollywood boys had left their cars. Rex had a very sporty looking machine, which in spite of its long lithe body could comfortably seat five people. Faxy managed to get Julie and Joan in first, then he left the rest of the arrangements to John Henderson.

"Quick—jump in front, Junior," called Faxy, to his chum and Junior needed no second bidding.

Mrs. Vernon came over to see that the girls were going to wait for the other automobiles and not start off in advance; and having their promise to behave as good little children should, when they are at a party, she went on to the other girls.

Thus there were two girls placed in the back seat of one of the motors belonging to Rex's friend, and the boys sat upon each other's knees in front, to the inconvenience of the driver of the machine. The

rest of the Troop, the registered, as well as honorary or auxiliary members, got in their hired cars and gave the signal that they were ready to start.

Rex led the way and when they had driven up to the Card Board Town, he began to do the honors as host for Hollywood. He enjoyed tremendously the surprise expressed by those who had never seen or understood how motion pictures were produced. They laughed when they were shown how the magnificent interiors of palatial homes were made up of shams; they wondered at their thrills as they had sat in an audience at Elmertown and felt their hearts thumping at the hair-raising exploits of some screen stars. How they laughed at the hoax played upon a susceptible public, when slap-stick pictures showed the leading man climbing the side of a house, or swinging out from a fifteen story building and risking his life in dropping from the roof and catching on to a window frame just before striking the street.

"All the same," declared Julie, after seeing all that was of interest, and turning to go back to the automobiles, "I love it all. It is a game of 'pretending,' and we all like to play it."

"Now, Julie!" remonstrated the Captain anxiously, "don't you go and engage yourself to play in these movies."

Everyone within hearing laughed, because that is

just what Julie might do, if she felt so inclined.

"But you must admit, Verny," argued Julie, "That it is a very simple way in which to make money—and lots of it, at that—and at the same time not run the risks I always thought the actors had."

"Come away, Captain," begged Betty, at this reply from her sister. "Julie has to go with us to the Redwoods, you know."

"No danger, Betzy!" called Julie gayly. "It is not so simple a matter to 'break' into the game as you seem to think."

Rex overheard this remark, and he added gallantly: "It depends greatly upon the one applying for a part."

Faxy frowned at this, and Julie laughed, then Joan said: "We'd better get into the car, unless we want to be the last."

"If Rex has to remain here, we can crowd in some of the other machines, girls," suggested Faxy, now willing to leave his chum behind. But Rex understood and smiled his knowing smile.

"I wouldn't think of bringing the girls out here in my car and then turning my back on the obligation. I'll drive back to the steamer, but you can exchange your place with one of the other boys, if you prefer."

"What do you take me for?" demanded Faxy.

So Rex smiled again and stood ready to assist

the girls into his car. Julie, eager to maintain harmony between these two old-time friends wisely ran over to the Captain and had her exchange seats with her. Since Mrs. Vernon came to accept the seat in Rex's car nothing could be done about it. But Rex scowled at Faxy and said in a whisper: "Now see what you've gone and done because of jealousy."

On board the steamer once more, the Troop learned that there were still twenty minutes to spare before sailing time; hence Rex had that much time to visit with them, before going ashore. It was in this short interval of time that he told Mr. Gilroy that he would be passing northward in a few weeks' time, to get certain films in the beautiful country in the vicinity of Lake Tahoe, in the Sierras.

"I will then be free to enjoy a few weeks' vacation, before beginning a new film," said he.

"Perhaps we shall meet you in the Mountains, or at San Francisco," remarked Mr. Gilroy.

"That's what I thought," admitted Rex. "I'll be through with the present picture just about the time that you are through with the Convention. Then we could visit the Sierras at the same time. I have been all through that section about Lake Tahoe, and I know all the trout pools and other fine sport-places."

Mr. Gilroy comprehended at once that Rex wished to join the Troop for a short camping excursion with them, and he cordially invited him to become one of their party, when they went to the Sierras. Rex being only too happy to do so, accepted the invitation with alacrity. Then the call came for all going ashore to leave, and the Star had to bid his new friends, as well as his old one, good-by.

He stood on the wharf watching the steamer move majestically away on its northward journey, and the Troop leaned over the rail on the deck and waved their hands, until he was a mere speck.

Then Faxy felt relieved, and showed it in his sunny smile. It was not for long, however, for he now heard disconcerting news.

"You girls will be glad to hear that I have invited Rex to join our camping party in the Sierras, after we break camp in the Redwoods," announced Mr. Gilroy.

"Did he accept?" chorused eager voices.

"Of course he did! Did you think he was a stone image, not to appreciate this opportunity to visit with such nice girls," retorted Mr. Gilroy.

Julie could not help glancing at Faxy from under her long eye-lashes, and when she saw his frown she felt like shaking him. If he was going to ruin the whole summer's fun by pretending to be in love and show his jealousy in sulks and moods, when-

ever she smiled upon another gallant, then she would tell him where he'd get off!

"It's too bad Rex and his friends could not come with us now, to be company for us scouts who have no one with whom to parade the decks between here and San Francisco," murmured Amy.

Her ambiguous sentence caused a laugh, and Judith said: "It would have to be a dreadfully long deck to reach so far. I for one, would resign from the hiking party."

"You won't be without escorts very long, girls, once we reach San Francisco. Between Mr. Henderson and Mr. Fairfax, as well as Gilly's and my efforts, we will bring every nice-looking chap at the Convention to call upon you," promised Mr. Vernon.

"Oh, but we don't want you elderly men, V.," protested Amy.

The "elderly" men laughed, and Mr. Fairfax said: "Do you think that all members of the Trade at the coming Convention are elderly? There will be as many young bloods present as there are old ones. My son is a member, but for some unknown cause, he seems to have lost interest in the Convention."

"If he knew it was a losing cause at that, Mr. Fairfax, maybe he would feel his old-time interest in lumber," said Julie.

Mr. Fairfax, Senior, laughed at her remark and promised to see Faxy about it.

"And tell him at the same time, that he might as well resume his interest in timbers, because Sandy will soon arrive west to begin his duties in the San Bernardino Mountains. By that time I shall know how to manage an aeroplane and take flight from the danger-zone. You see, don't you, Mr. Fairfax, that life for me could offer no joy, with Faxy, Sandy and Rex at it hammer and tongs all the time. Not over *me!* no; but because their egotism gets a little shaking up, when they think themselves slighted by a girl."

"Julie, you're a wide-awake scout, all right! No wonder Captain Vernon says she relies so much on your judgment. Where did you cultivate it, in that little country place called Elmertown?"

Julie smiled. "I'm like Topsy. It wasn't borned, it just grew!"

The steamer came into port at the Golden Gate and then every one on board bustled and packed and came upon deck ready to leave the home which had carried them safely across the waters of the Pacific, to this their haven.

Mr. Vernon had wired weeks before leaving Elmertown for reservations at one of the best hotels in San Francisco during the Convention Week, and now the Troop learned with pleasure

that the Hendersons and Fairfaxes had engaged accommodations at the same hotel.

They arrived the same day the Convention was to open with a grand reception. That evening, therefore, the Troop took extra efforts and time in trying to enhance Nature's work of beauty. Mr. Vernon sent word twice to their rooms before they appeared ready to join him and his companions.

Mr. Gilroy and Mr. Vernon were gratified at what they beheld as the girls and their Captain hurried over to apologise for being late. Then Mr. Gilroy said: "No danger of these witches being left without victims this week."

"No," laughed Mr. Vernon. "You and I will be the most popular and sought-after men—elderly men—on the Pacific Coast, after this evening."

"Why, V.?" asked Betty innocently. "Have you any extra fine lumber to sell?"

"That depends on what one would consider 'lumber,' " was his reply, with a chuckle.

"It doesn't sound very flattering, that name of 'lumber,' " said Joan. "I've heard of individuals having 'timber' in their characters, but never 'lumber.' "

"One is led to interpret it as useless things," giggled Amy. "Every one in Elmertown has a 'lumber room' in the attic, where we toss old cast-off objects. That would mean 'lumber.' "

Betty appeared to be as much at sea as before, so they laughed at her and Julie said: "Wake up, Betzy. They're joshing."

That evening, and the days and evenings following the opening of the Convention, proved to be one gala time for the girls. Instead of "travelling light" as Mr. Gilroy always advised, they had had to buy suitable apparel to dress up to the honor of being known as the "belles of the city."

"We can stand it, however," admitted Mr. Gilroy one day, "because it gives V. and me such a rest. With so many bees buzzing about our bouquet of flowers—American Beauties, at that—we are spared any effort in entertaining you."

Which, thus far, had been true because the Troop had become popular with many friends of Mr. Vernon's, and these families insisted upon having the girls accompany them on every sight-seeing tour. Many of these friends had sons or young partners with them at the Convention, and thus the scouts had plenty of beaux.

Just before the Convention concluded, Mr. Gilroy got a telephone message that Tally, the Indian Guide, had arrived in the city. He started out immediately to meet him, and thereafter the two were occupied in selecting outfits and necessities for a short camping trip to the Redwoods—the belt north of San Francisco. It had been decided by Mr.

Vernon and his two business companions, Fairfax and Henderson, to visit the Redwood Belt south of the City later in the summer.

The Troop hailed the news that Tally had come and that everything had been prepared for the Redwoods' Camp, whenever they said the word.

"We're ready to start at once," said Julie. "This city life of excitement and dust is getting on my nerves."

"When does the Convention end, dear?" asked Mrs. Vernon, of her husband. "Our leaving the city depends on that."

"This is the last meeting, and it is not very important, at that," returned Mr. Vernon. "I had half-decided not to attend it at all. If you like, we can plan and pack to-day, and be ready to start for the Redwoods in the morning."

"Hurrah! that's great!" cried several of the scouts, and the Captain added: "We'll be ready, never fear!"

"How about the others?" asked Mr. Gilroy, meaning the Fairfaxes and Hendersons.

"Oh! the ladies told me this morning that they preferred staying another week in San Francisco, and then meeting us somewhere to go to the Sierras together," explained Mrs. Vernon.

"Aren't they coming with us, then?" asked several of the girls, in a tone of disappointment.

"Not the two ladies, but the *elderly men* are coming with me to inspect the timber of those forests," replied Mr. Vernon, with a slight accent on "elderly men."

"Well, that will give us girls a fine rest from having to bother about young chaps," said Julie, with a sigh of relief.

Joan looked at her in surprise, but she saw that Julie was merely talking for the sake of having something to say to hide her chagrin at being left to go to camp alone without the boys. Such a thing had never been thought possible!

That evening the bills were paid and all arrangements made for an early start for the Redwoods. Tally called at the hotel and reported that he had been able to secure good horses for the trip from the railroad station to the spot where the Troop were to camp. All was completed, when a telephone conversation between Mr. Vernon in a public booth of the hotel, and some one in a room upstairs, was overheard by Julie. In this way, she discovered that Faxy and Junior were going with the party at dawn the next day, and that he was now being warned not to mention it to the scouts, since they believed that they were going without young escorts.

Julie lost no time in telling Joan of her discovery, and Joan was sent to warn the other scouts of the news. Then Julie said: "Now you girls have got

to give me an hour's free time in which to write my regular weekly installment for the *Elmertown Record*, which I have postponed until this, the last night it can be done. Even so, I shall have to mail it special delivery, in order to reach the paper in time for the week's story."

"Go write, and we'll watch," agreed Judith. "But let us hear what you've written before you seal the envelope."

Julie ran away to the writing room and was soon engrossed in her work—or rather her delight, for she loved to write. She wrote:

"One thing which strikes a visitor to San Francisco is the neatness and the systematic plan of its streets. I'm told that this was not the case before the earthquake, which destroyed the city, so that an entirely new order of things had to be established.

"Even though the streets are a pleasant surprise to us, from the East, we find another surprise, not quite so agreeable. I refer to the climate, which we have been told is simply perfect!

"From the praises and paens we've heard back East about the Californian climate, and the complaints about our 'damp days,' which the natives of this state make, when they come to visit the East, one would be led to think that Pacific Coast days and nights are idyllically perfect. Not so! They

never drop one hint about their awful sand-storms, or the cutting fogs!

"If you dare to open your mouth to complain about these annoying features of the Californian climate, presto! your mouth is filled with dust enough to effectually gag you. Your nostrils and eyes are constantly in need of being emptied of the contents deposited there by the winds. If you dare to appear out-of-doors with an expensive marcel wave not heavily covered with a protective hood, the awful fog bites in and gone is your wave!

"Should you be so inconsiderate of their climate as to mention your disappointment or irritation at the true conditions, the Californians will look at you in wondering pity, and remark: 'How strange! we never noticed any west winds being annoying!' There's loyalty for you, all right! Even in the face of dust and grit forever being forced into your open face, to hear them laud their country! I've watched the speakers seek temporary refuge from an extra puff of a gale which carried tons of dirt along with it, and then seen them come forth to continue their eulogy about their climate!

"Any one coming here expecting to find balmy zephyrs and golden sunshine, will find fierce trade winds and a scorching red-hot sun at noon; if you are unwise enough to take a trip to some point of interest and feel the heat of the midday too much

for a wrap, you'll regret it at night. The moment the sun sinks, the chill winds spring up and make your teeth chatter and your blood run cold.

"We noticed that the natives avoid the shady places of the streets as they would the plague. We asked and learned the reason for this. No matter how hot the sun may shine upon the city, the shadows always keep their damp chill to make you shiver.

"These complaints about climate, however, are completely forgotten when one sees the scenery and wonderful flowers and fruit growing so lavishly in the country. No one, once having plucked a ripe orange or other fruit from the trees where the sun has ripened it, can conceive of the delicious flavor and juice of such fruit. In our eastern markets the oranges and grape-fruit are picked while they are green—many weeks before we get them. Then they are prepared, packed, and shipped, to ripen during transit. This deprives the fruit of its best flavor, of course, just as a green cherry is sour and lacking in taste.

"Before I conclude this installment for the paper, I would like to speak of the Greek Theatre at the University of California. It is planned after the famous theatre in Greece. It has a vast natural amphitheatre nestling at the foot of a mountain. Fancy yourself sitting under a starlit sky, to watch

Romeo and Juliet being played midst such beautiful natural settings and scenery. I do not refer to this particular romance just because the girl happened to be my namesake, but because the play fitted in so perfectly with the time, the place, and the company that invited me to see it.

"I said in my last letter that I would try and give you housewives a few recipes of the unusual dishes we have had served in these western restaurants. But I find it difficult to get any recipes. They all seem to think that it would be a crime to divulge the means by which the finished dish is made. Perhaps it is; who knows?

"One day we ordered a dish which went by an amazing Spanish name, and we discovered it was fried chicken flavored with cinnamon and coated with pulverized nuts. But, O Boy! it was good!

"Another time I ordered a dessert, and upon tasting it I found it to be a tutti frutti of sweets mixed with grapefruit, and buried under whipped cream. That was another bit of nectar fit for the gods—as well as for myself!

"I am earnestly considering the writing of a new cook book for friends back home. Imagine dinners, with chicken such as I have described, and all the other courses to correspond to that order of culinary art, and ending with a dessert fit for the gods. Can you see how the undertaker of Elmertown would

flourish and prosper if that cookbook became popular with you?

"But there are simple dishes here, as well as the richer viands; the *chile con carne* and *tamales* one gets here are very different from the brand handed out at midnight to the hungry hordes of Elmertown, after one of our 'Travelogue Lectures' at the Y. M. C. A. Here they are toothsome dainties; there they are whatever you wish to call them when the acute attack of indigestion overtakes you."

Julie wrote rapidly thus far, then she rested her elbow upon the desk and chewed the end of her pen for inspiration. In a moment, she seemed to remember something she had forgotten to say, so she resumed her writing again. The pen flew back and forth, and her face expressed the various emotions she felt as she wrote.

"We have been told that in our mountain trips we will have to eat *frijoles* and *tortillas,* because those are the only things the native guides can cook. We shall not object, if they taste half as good as the hoe-cakes we ate the other day.

"Yesterday noon we ate Spanish omelette made of ostrich eggs. Think of it! eating dollars and dollars worth of concentrated plumes! This noon for luncheon Gilly ordered chowder made of the abalone. You know, I suppose, that the abalone is a mollusk which is prepared here and shipped in

great quantities to China. (I trust you *do* know this, I was ignorant of the fact until to-day.)

"You folks at home have used the slang expression freely 'He gets my goat!' or 'They made a goat of him, or her.' But here we eat 'the goat' —and believe me it is good!

"A visit to San Francisco would be incomplete without a visit to Chinatown. We went there one evening and dined, then spent a thrilling time about the town until after midnight. The *chop suey* prepared here and served by genuine sons of China, is wonderful. I can't begin to describe it, but I was told by our Chink waiter that it was fried in peanut oil. I have decided after hearing this to fry everything hereafter in peanut oil. Why do we not use that in our kitchens instead of imitation lard or olive oil? It is much cheaper and more nutritious, and far more delectable.

"Well, friends, I have finished my installment for the week, so I will end with the hope that you all may have an opportunity to visit California and revel, as we do, in everything wonderful here, except the wind and fog."

Julie left the writing room to call her chums to hear what she had written, and then they sealed and mailed the letter, and hurried to bed in order to be up at daybreak, for the early start for the Redwoods.

CHAPTER VIII

THE REDWOODS

THE Troop had no sleepy-heads in its membership, nor in the annexed, honorary, summer branch, hence the early start from San Francisco, which had been scheduled by Tally, was made on time. On the train, which would convey the campers as far as the ranch, where Tally had arranged for horses and the fully equipped tents for a short camping period, the merry young people got together and spoke of various things.

"I wonder if we saw everything in San Francisco worth a sight?" said Judith, glancing over the notes she had made during the visit in the city.

"How could you doubt it?" asked Junior. "Didn't you have enough eager escorts to go here and there and everywhere with you girls, if only for the sake of getting you away from the crowds in the City."

"That is as *you* think," retorted Judith. "But I never did believe Cupid was much of an official guide, where there was any sight-seeing to be done. Love is blind, you know; and Verny says this regiment of ardent escorts, that seemed to spring

up the moment we put foot in the city, were so blind that they never saw even her! If they failed to see our Captain, is it not possible that we failed, also, in not seeing all the sights?"

"I can mention one noted place that neither of you girls visited," remarked Mr. Vernon.

"What is it?" chorused the scouts.

"The Mission Dolores, the oldest landmark in San Francisco," returned he.

"Ah, but you're wrong there!" declared his wife. "We can tell you all about the beautiful old relic which was founded in 1776." Then she described the place and convinced her husband that he had been in error.

"That was the day we planned the drive to Del Monte for a luncheon party," added Joan. "Our kodak pictures will prove how interested we were in the old Mission."

"I believe that roll of film is packed with those of Seal Rocks and the University of California," suggested Julie.

Faxy now added his testimony. "I remember it very well—not the films, but the trip to the Mission. On the drive back to the hotel John reminded you girls that you must be sure to visit the Leland Stanford University, and you wondered how it would be possible to wedge in any extra sightseeing."

The Troops made a practice of keeping strict accounts of the money spent for these trips, and now the Captain was called upon to bring out the memorandom book. This was handed to Joan to read aloud.

"There's one pleasant surprise in store for you Dandelioners," giggled Joan. "Most of our accounts are on the credit page,—thanks to these auxiliary members and the Cupids we met in San Francisco."

"Perhaps there will be Cupids at other places, where we might have to stop for a time," ventured Amy, causing a merry laugh.

The Captain was shocked at such downright parsimony, and the boys laughed at her expression. Junior explained: "Why, Captain, the modern girl thinks nothing of telling her escort what he must buy for her and how much he must pay for it."

"I suppose they think they are breaking in the men for a married life, eh?" quizzed Mr. Gilroy, glancing at the girls.

"That is how I developed so perfectly as a cashier," added Mr. Vernon.

"My *dear!*" exclaimed his wife, frowning at such banter.

"It's fortunate for you scouts that I remained a bachelor, or we never could have taken these lovely mountain trips together," remarked Mr. Gilroy.

"Bachelor or not," retorted Julie, "you never would have enjoyed our adventures were it not for our first mountain camp in the Blue Ridge that summer, when we found you half-dead in the cave."

This statement, heard by the three boys who had not known of the rescue of the assaulted scientist in Bluebeard's Cave, the first year of the scouts' camping experiences, caused them to demand the story. So Julie, ably assisted by Joan and the other girls, narrated their visit to the Crest and the capture of the two convicts.

"And ever since that time, boys," added Mr. Gilroy, "the scouts will not permit me to venture far from home without insisting upon accompanying me, fondly believing that they are protecting me by their presence."

"You are mistaken, Gilly," Joan corrected now; "We come with you, when invited, because we find our exchequer remains in a healthier and stronger condition with you at hand to pay for so many incidentals."

"There now, Gilly!" laughed Mr. Vernon, "that ought to take the egotism out of your sails for a time."

"I suspected this cause for my popularity, and that is one reason I decided to *share* the joy of playing fairy godfather to so many vamps this summer.

Behold my recruits to the cause of paying the price of being a hero of mammon." As he spoke, Mr. Gilroy waved his hand to include the three amused young gallants in the group.

"To relieve the fears of such a poor Treasurer for the Troop, let me explain here that the cost of the Redwoods Camp has been assumed by the Scouts, Gilly, and you-all are their guests for the time being," said Mrs. Vernon.

"How is that possible, Captain, when I have *made* all the plans and insist upon inviting whom I please to my camp!" exclaimed Mr. Gilroy, who dearly loved to play host to his friends.

"It is not your trip, nor your camp, Gilly," returned Mr. Vernon. "Do not forget that you must confine your ambitions to the regions where the glacial deposits are to be found; and I, being the man concerned about lumber, and these Redwoods in particular, have the privilege of leasing out the camp rights to any hostesses I choose."

"All right then," snapped Mr. Gilroy instantly. "Don't forget that the camps in the Sierras, which follow this one in the Redwoods, is to be *my* opportunity to play the Star Lead."

"These delightful threats meet with our fullest approval, because it hints at added adventures immediately following our camp in the Redwood Belt," was Mrs. Vernon's smiling answer.

"Speaking of the *Redwood Belt* just now reminds me that you scouts ought to know something of the peculiarities of these famous Redwoods," began Mr. Vernon.

"You must know that this Belt of Big Trees is distinctly different from the groves of other Big Trees, which are located along the ridge of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. These Coast Ranges are not so high and they present shorter ranges, with intervening valleys to break up their continuity. They are covered with a forest growth, which is peculiar to the vicinity of the ocean; the interior ranges of the Sierras are in places quite barren, or covered with a chapparal growth.

"You will find that the ozone from the Pacific Ocean, and the wonderful climate, mingling with the aromatic perfume of the Redwoods, creates an atmosphere most delightful. These Redwoods forests are considered the most magnificent campsites in the West."

"It is plain to be seen that V. knows his lessons on forestry by heart," laughed Joan.

"It is our good fortune to have such an apt pupil with us," added Julie.

"I thought I had been advanced to the position of 'teacher' on these subjects," chuckled Mr. Vernon.

"We'll decide that point later, after you have

stood the tests for promotion," replied the Captain.

Tally now approached the group and apologised for interrupting this good natured banter. "We soon come to ranch, Mr. Gilroy, where we go to find horses and camp stuff."

"Oh, are we there already?" was the surprised reply.

"One—two mile more, and the train stop. Tally begin to hold up your outfits, eh?" said the Guide, suiting the words with the act and loading himself with miscellaneous camping items.

The Troop of happy and expectant campers then left the train and reached the ranch, where they were to receive their equipment. The rancher made a business of renting the tents, plus the outfits; horses could be hired for a day, or for any extended time, during the term of camping in the Redwood Belt. The rancher greeted the Troop and led the way to the pick of his horses, which Tally had personally selected at his former visit to the place.

"I will conduct you part of the way to the Belt," offered the rancher, "and point out some of the finest camp-sites of the entire Range. You know, I suppose, that the Belt is only 450 miles long, and from one to twenty miles wide."

"So I believe," agreed Mr. Vernon, but the rancher was not aware that he was speaking to a

Troop that had an experienced lumberman as a member of their group. Now he continued:

"It is said that the Coast Redwoods show the tallest trees to be found anywhere on earth. Some of them attain a height of 350 feet and have a diameter of from ten to sixteen feet."

"So I have heard," agreed Mr. Vernon again. One of the scouts began to giggle at this, and Julie promptly gave her a sharp dig in the ribs to silence her amusement.

The rancher, riding ahead, with Mr. Vernon abreast of him, now said: "Before we reach the region in these forests where I think you will find the most attractive camp-site for your party, I would like to say a few interesting facts about our Redwoods.

"If you fell an adult Redwood tree you will find a circle of sprouts grow up from the base of the trunk. This circle of young growth forms the future Redwoods. They are vigorous and able to resist the outside attacks of climate and soil, which prove to be their only problems in youth. All other conifers grow from seedlings, and their seeds are often smothered by the dense layers of fallen forest debris, and they also shrivel up quite often from the unfavorable soil and climate where they are exposed.

"Now with our Redwoods: they owe their health

and beauty to the climate and natural moisture which reaches them, because of their proximity to the sea. The summer fogs drift inland from the Pacific and reach the Belt, where it rests and baptizes the great family of Redwoods with its beneficial moisture."

The scouts listened attentively to this interesting information and then Mrs. Vernon asked the question: "How do you explain the limited area of these Redwoods, and the scattered groves of the Big Trees of the Sierras?"

"Well, it is claimed that these Redwoods and those Big Tree Groves are fragments left of what was once a vast forest range of gigantic trees. History associates them with the geology of this region, and it is believed that the upheavals and subsidences of the land since the Miocene Age will account for the disappearance of the continuity and the greater part of this gigantic forest. Possibly the Continental Shelf was, at one time, a forest thickly covered with Big Trees, even as, at that time, the earth produced great mammals and enormous beasts, instead of the animals familiar to us at the present age."

The Scouts were amazed at hearing a rancher discourse so intelligently of the Miocene Age and products of that time; but they now learned that this man had graduated from the very university which

they had visited and admired so much; and after being told by a physician that he had but a year to live, because of his weak lungs, he had turned away from the city and settled at the base of the Coast Range. He told them how he had fairly thrived upon the air laden with invigorating Redwood perfume, and in that year in which fate was to seal his doom, he recovered completely.

"Now," said he, "you cannot bribe me to live in the towns or cities again. I love my Redwood home, and I love to escort appreciative visitors to their heart, and laud their glories to the skies."

Mr. Vernon then said that he was interested in lumber; because he had studied forestry, and had chosen the lumber business as one way of enjoying his knowledge of trees. The rancher was delighted to meet a comrade in love of the forests, and thereafter he devoted most of his conversation to him.

"Being interested in the lumber trade, you ought to visit the mills in Oregon and Washington, sir. There you will see great sticks of timber a hundred feet in length and more than a foot square, in stock, all ready to ship to the Trade. Why, some of those mills can supply *upon order* timbers so long and thick that you have to marvel at the dexterity and ease with which the jacks handle them."

"It must need a great area of land to keep such stock on hand," suggested Mr. Vernon.

"It does—an enormous area; because these dealers in big timbers do not keep merely a few sticks such as I have mentioned, but a large stock of straight-grained, light-weight, durable pine planks.

"The 'canoe-cedar,' so-called because the northern tribes of Indians used it for their large war canoes, has been utilized by us for domestic purposes and needs. The bark of this tree is used in weaving mats, clothing, rope and other products for human need."

"How long have you lived in this Redwood Belt?" asked Mr. Gilroy of the rancher.

He laughed. "I refuse to keep count of the years. I am one who believes that, in forgetting Time completely, he will forget you. It goes to prove that I must be right, because my friends and the visitors to the Belt will not believe that I was a young man of twenty-three when the doctors told me I would 'skiddoo' before the year ended. I did skiddoo, but not to the ethereal realms. I was content to remain in this Belt of Redwoods. That was more than forty years ago,—long before it became the rage to camp in California."

The exclamations of amazement at hearing that this stalwart Westerner was *more* than thirty years of age seemed to amuse him immensely. He replied to their curious though silent questions:

"You see, give yourself intelligence and understanding, and then apply such wisdom with Nature's advices to live a simple life in the open, and there is no reason for growing old and decrepit. Nature gives you all the rejuvenating life you can assimilate. That's the secret."

That night the Troop enjoyed its first night in camp in the wonderful forest of Redwoods. The rancher had taken them to a site on the lower Eel River, and here they pitched their tents. The canopy of aromatic verdure overhead scarcely permitted the silvery beams of the moon to filter through, so heavy was the crown of the Redwood trees.

"It's a night to make one dream of pixies," mused Joan, seated upon the carpet of moss and gazing up at the mystical shadows overhead.

"Why not call it romance with a capital R?" said Junior.

"Because Romance has no right to trespass on the preserves of gnomes and fairies," said Joan rebukingly.

"But poesy and romance go hand in hand, and you dare not say that poesy is excluded from such a glorious night's experiences," called Faxy, who was stretched at full length upon the bed of fragrant Redwood fans which he had gathered for himself.

A loud sigh interrupted these musings, and the

girls heard Mr. Gilroy add: "What a terrible experience it is to have all the symptoms of romance before you, and yet be such a baldheaded old chap as I am! Such a time, in such a place, with such Circes—and to be excluded from Paradise, because of age and 'fatty hearts.' "

As the speaker concluded his lament, a roar of laughter from his unsympathetic audience effectually put an end to all amorous suggestions.

"Really, Gilly, you'd make the Moon throw a green cheese at your head, for ruining such wonderful moments of delight," cried Julie impatiently.

"How nice it would be to secure that famous green cheese so easily," retorted Mr. Gilroy. "I am very partial to cheese."

"Maybe that is why he is such a big piece," said Mr. Vernon quickly. Even the victim of this slang had to join in the loud laughter occasioned by the remark.

"We boys would be only too happy to have you staid elderly men turn into Romeos for the time being. Fancy how thrilling it must be to fling yourself down at the feet of a goddess and there pour forth an ardent stream of poesy and love," said John chaffingly.

"If I were to fling myself down without due care of the welcome I might receive from the hard ground it is dubious whether I could summon

enough breath to murmur *any* thing, let alone a flood-tide of romantic poems," chuckled Mr. Gilroy.

"As it stands now, however, there are too many maidens for the number of young admirers, and the very fact of there being an unfair advantage on the side of the fair sex makes me offer my resignation for the pedestal of 'victim'," remarked Mr. Vernon; then he scrambled to his feet and went to ask Tally for a match.

"Don't tell us that you would desecrate this sylvan bower by smoking an old cigar of tobacco!" exclaimed the Captain.

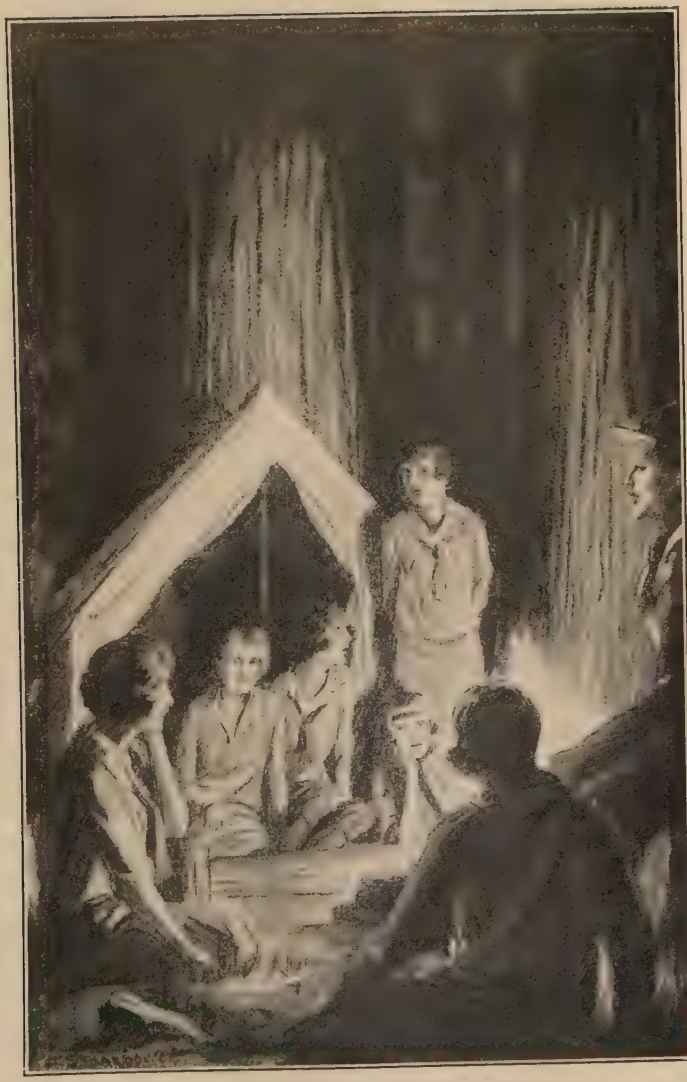
"But yes, what other weed could I smoke, if not tobacco," quizzed her husband.

"Besides, Captain," added Mr. Gilroy, accepting a cigar for himself from his friend's case, "These Redwoods need to be fumigated of love germs. It is really alarming to note how many incipient cases are developing the symptoms. A good smoke screen from our cigars might drive out the moths of love."

"Gilly!" cried a chorus of disgusted voices, and made the two men laugh heartily at the expressions on the faces of the scouts.

"If you really think that the forest needs fumigating suppose we all start for a walk down the shadowy aisle of this fine Redwood Cathedral," proposed Faxy.

"That's an idea! Let's do it!" agreed the girls,



Camping among the giant Redwoods.

and soon they all started away to adventure in the silent, darkened retreats of these monarchs of the forest.

The Troop marched through the winding ways between the Big Trees, singing and laughing as they went, each one enjoying the novelty of being at the mercy of Nature in the soft night, yet feeling relieved in the knowledge that in case of need, Tally was there with a powerful pocket flashlight.

On they wandered, here and there, and finally were held up by Mr. Vernon who was at the head of the line. He called suddenly to Tally, and all stopped where they were.

"One of the sea fogs coming over!" called he, then he added: "Tally, try the flashlight and see that it is working all right."

The Guide tried and tried, because the scouts could here the click of the switch, but no glimmer emanated from the bulb.

"She no light," called Tally, trying again and again to contact the wires by pushing the button.

"Don't tell me it won't light!" cried the Captain, in an anxious tone of voice.

Mr. Vernon struck a match and held it that Tally might see what was the trouble; but Mr. Gilroy said: "Battery burnt out."

"Then we'll have to grope our way back to camp as best we can," said Mrs. Vernon.

"It's too bad we wandered as we have. If the fog gets through the tops of the trees and falls to envelope us in its thick folds, we may as well say good-night and stretch out upon the ground right where we are," was Mr. Vernon's remark, in a tone that told the scouts that it seemed dubious if they could find their way back to camp that night.

After stumbling and groping about for a time with no results of feeling the pathway under their feet, Mr. Vernon called so that all could hear his advice: "We are getting nowhere in this aimless circling; far better is it for us to sit down and wait for the dense fog-roof to lift or break. Then the light from the starry sky might aid us somewhat."

The pitchy darkness now seemed to become so thick that one felt as though it could be caught and held between the hands. So they all did as they had been advised: they sat down to wait for the lifting of the fog-bank. But Mr. Vernon did not tell them that it was not unusual to have the summer sea-fogs hang over the Redwood Belt for hours at a stretch, before breaking up to pour its moisture down upon the trees.

Consequently the night dragged slowly by, and the girls gave up watching and indulged in cat-naps. Sound sleep was out of the question, because the ground was too uncomfortable for comfort.

"I've heard said that the concussion caused by a gun-

shot will often break up a fog-bank, as well as a rain-cloud," said Junior, as the hours passed and still no signs of the lifting of the fog could be seen or felt.

"But we didn't bring any guns," said Mr. Gilroy. "Like a lot of Tenderfeet, we started out without testing the flashlight, or using ordinary precautions against the unexpected. So here we are!"

At last the day began to break, and the heavy fog began to let go its stored-up water. In a short time after Tally stirred the Troop in order to be starting after him to find the trail, the moisture began to trickle down from the crowns of the trees and then it began to fall like a shower upon the defenceless wanderers.

On and on they plodded now, soaked and weary and foot-sore. And on they stumbled grumbling, and dripping water at every step, until finally Tally shouted a glad word: "Camp!"

After reaching their camp-site, Mr. Gilroy called to all: "Nothing like life in the Redwood Belt, eh? But give me my camps on the glacial sides of the moraines where we dig for trophies. A whole season in such a camp is nothing like this one night in V.'s Redwoods."

In spite of bedraggled looks and dripping clothes the Troop greeted the remark with a laugh and a jeer, then Julie added:

"And thus endeth the first lesson in the Redwoods."

CHAPTER IX

FROM REDWOODS TO LAKE TAHOE

THE Dandelioners had expected to camp in the Redwoods for at least two weeks, but the rancher came to the camp one morning, at the beginning of their second week, and brought a telegram for Mr. Vernon. It had been sent to the ranch with the hope of having it forwarded to the campers in the forest.

"Well, now!" exclaimed Mr. Vernon, after hastily reading the lengthy message, "this is too bad!"

"What is it, V.?" asked several anxious voices.

"A most important appointment with a group of business associates makes it necessary that I return to San Francisco to-day, or to-morrow. This means that I will not be able to complete the two weeks with you in our Redwood camp," explained he.

"Oh, V.!" cried a chorus of disappointed scouts, as they gathered about him and began suggesting excuses to detain him.

"Can't be 'did'," insisted Mr. Vernon, trying to be facetious with his slang. "If I fail to keep this business meeting I would not have the wherewithal

to accompany you to next year's camp; besides it involves the greater part of the lumber trade for next season, so you see it is imperative that I be present."

"When would you have to start back, dear?" asked his wife.

"I really *ought* to start to-day, but I could wait until morning, if our courteous messenger will wire a reply to San Francisco for me," replied Mr. Vernon, bowing to the rancher.

The rancher agreed to wire his reply to the waiting men in San Francisco and then Mr. Vernon went to his tent to write out what he wished to say. During his absence the girls showed their disappointment.

"I declare! it is too bad," said Julie, pouting in her annoyance, "Every summer, so far, it has been Gilly who has ended our trips so unceremoniously; but now V. is beginning right at the start of our camp-life. If this continues we are in for a horrid summer."

"But the going of one man from the camping party should not make such a difference for the rest of this week," returned Faxy.

Julie glanced at him in surprise, then turned to look at the Captain. "Why! I took for granted that we were all going back to the city with him. What did you expect to do, Verny?"

"Whatever the rest of you wish to do," said she.

"If any one would ask my opinion,—but of course they won't, since I am of no account in this Troop,—I'd say let's break camp and go with V. Then we can make an earlier start for the Sierras, where I will be 'at home' and can entertain you as befits a Troop of Scouts," was Mr. Gilroy's opinion now.

"With our forester gone, who will guide us and tell us about the wonders of the Redwoods?" sighed Joan disconsolately.

"Exactly!" agreed Mr. Gilroy. "Therefore let us turn our backs upon dead hopes and turn our faces to the peaks of the Sierra Mountains. There, my fellow-sufferers, you shall find joy and all the thrills you wish for, while I can find many samples of trash in the moraines to add to my collection."

"What say you, Captain?" asked Julie, turning to Mrs. Vernon, just as the written message was handed to the rancher by Mr. Vernon.

"Did you send word that you would be back to-morrow?" asked Mrs. Vernon, of her husband.

"Yes, I think that ought to be time enough. I want to enjoy one more night in these beautiful woods," answered he.

"Well, what do you think of having us return with you, V.?" asked Mr. Gilroy.

"Oh! don't let my going cut the week short for you all!" exclaimed Mr. Vernon.

"It isn't that, so much," explained Julie; "but the moment one member of a party deserts, it effects the entire crowd. If you leave us here for the remaining few days, we will feel that the party has been broken up. We'd much prefer to break camp now and return with you to the City, there to get ready for our extended trip to the Sierras."

The rancher was then allowed to leave with the telegram as it had been written by Mr. Vernon; for, said he, "It won't make much difference in the message, whether I go alone or go in company with you all."

"I don't know but that this plan to break camp now and go on to the Sierras without more delay is a very good one," ventured John Henderson. "You see, if you folks postpone that mountain trip, until the summer season is on in full tide, you won't get half the pleasure out of it. One of the delights of camping in the mountains is the sense of solitude and isolation. Lake Tahoe, and all the other places of interest to be visited in the Sierra Nevada Range will be overrun with tourists at the beginning of July."

"How long must you remain in San Francisco to attend to your business, dear?" asked the Captain of Mr. Vernon.

"Not more than three days at the most," returned he.

"That would be ample time for us to finish any arrangements for the Lake Tahoe visit and to plan our itinerary for the camps in the Sierras," said Mr. Gilroy. "That is, with the Troop's approval."

"Oh, yes!" hastily agreed the girls in one voice. "We are not keen about remaining in the city, now that we have had a taste of camping again."

Therefore Tally was instructed to get everything ready for the early morning start away from the Redwoods, and then they went for one last fishing party in the tributary of the Eel River, where their supply of fish had been taken during the week in camp.

On the hike to the stream Faxy said: "I am expecting a letter from Sandy to be waiting for me at the hotel in San Francisco. It may be possible that he is now on his way to the San Bernardino Mountains. Does any one here feel his presence near us?"

"If you are referring to the Captain, Faxy, I ought to tell you that she is not one bit psychic," was Julie's quick reply, before her friends could turn, to send her an amused look.

"Perhaps you have that gift?" hinted he.

"In some ways,—yes. I can tell when any one is making a joke of himself; and I also can prophesy how certain awful things might happen to such a silly boy."

"Oh! that is not a psychic gift, Jule," laughed Joan. "It is simple common sense. Any one of us could tell Faxy that much."

"If you will give me an opportunity to say a word," came from Mrs. Vernon now, "I'll promise to tell you the moment I feel Sandy's presence in California. I may lack the gift Julie claims to have for herself, but there are some gifts so fully developed that the girls would be amazed to hear about them."

"The San Bernardino Range is very long, you know, Verny, and Sandy might be located at the extreme southern end," suggested Julie. "Would it make any difference if the wave lengths between your location in the Sierras and Sandy's in the San Bernardino Range were stretched to the breaking point?"

"No difference whatever!" declared the Captain, with a knowing smile. And the scouts all wondered what had made her smile.

"I suppose you would establish a radio station between yourselves, eh?" asked Joan roguishly.

"We have no need of stations," laughed Mrs. Vernon, thoroughly enjoying her secret, whatever it might be.

"Give up, Jo!" cried Judith. "Verny refuses to be caught."

"Yes, I am a wise 'fish' that refuses to nibble

at such bait," retorted Mrs. Vernon. "You have the hook plainly exposed, girls, and no fine adult trout will strike at such evident tricks."

"Look! Look! the Captain's fishhook is being carried away!" shouted Junior now, pointing at the line which had been left to take care of itself during the exchange of words between the girls and their Captain.

To save the entire outfit from being lost, Mr. Gilroy caught the line from the astonished woman's grasp and after a little play landed a small fish upon the bank beside her. This concluded the argument about Sandy, and all thoughts were now concentrated on the fishing.

That evening Mr. Gilroy told of the beauties and surprises to be found in the Valley of the Yosemite, —one of the points of interest which the Troop planned to visit that season.

"I only hope our families will vote to go with you, when you leave San Francisco for the mountain trip," said Faxy.

"It would be great to have them join our party and drive those two fine cars on the visit to Lake Tahoe," added Julie.

"Julie is thinking of saving the Vacation Fund, rather than wishing your families the joy of her company, boys," laughed Mr. Gilroy.

"Of course! isn't that the proper thing for a Treasurer to do?" said she.

"We might telephone Rex, too, as soon as we land in Frisco, and find out if he has finished that film," suggested Junior. "Maybe he will be able to drive directly to join us, before we start on the mountain trip."

"We? Then it is a foregone conclusion that you are to be with us, Junior?" asked Joan eagerly.

"Me?—for myself, I can say assuredly 'yes'. For John and the folks I am not answering," replied he.

"And for your automobile? Can you answer for that?" was Joan's quick demand. It brought a chorus of "Oh's!" and "Ah's!" which would have disconcerted a more humble scout, but not Joan!

Junior laughed and nodded, but he said: "That remains to be seen."

"In case you are not given the machine to drive for us, it might be advisable to ask Rex to bring a string of Stars with him—providing they each have a car," suggested Mr. Vernon jokingly.

"Won't a lot of Planets do as well as Stars?" asked Faxy.

"Why not invite the Suns and be done with it; but be sure to spell them with an 'o' instead of the 'u', or we girls will feel unhappy about it," suggested Judith.

"I say! this is getting to be too deep for me, friends!" declared Mr. Gilroy, holding up his hands in protest. "I'll be in over my head if I sit here any longer to listen to these profound gems of wisdom."

The general laugh which greeted his speech began to break up the circle seated about the embers of the campfire. And now Mrs. Vernon said it was time to get to bed, since there had to be an early breakfast in the morning and a start before the sun was up.

On the ride back to the ranch next day, where the tents and horses were to be left, Julie said to her companions: "This visit to the Redwoods seems more like a dream than the real thing."

"It's because the wonder of the Big Trees and the unexpected short-cutting of our stay there has not had time to impress you. But wait: when I conduct you to camp in the Redwood Belt which lies south of Frisco, we shall have an uninterrupted visit of peace. All my business affairs will have been completed then, and Gilly will have collected all the old rubbish, for which he had to come West, and we will only need to loll around and enjoy life," was Mr. Vernon's promise to the scouts.

"Sounds good," grumbled Julie.

"Lots of things sound fine, but they're not so when the time comes," remarked one of the scouts.

"This time is coming, and don't you doubt it!" was Mr. Vernon's positive assurance.

"Why, then, friends, we are on our way to the southern Belt of Redwoods now!" cried Julie, suddenly smiling at a thought.

"No, Julie! we are on our way to start for Lake Tahoe," said Betty, in order to correct her sister's mistaken idea.

"I repeat: we are on our way to camp in the Southern Belt of Redwoods. It doesn't matter where we stop on our way there, or how far astray we might be led, but V. swears we are surely going to camp in those forests, when all Gilly's rushing is over; so it must be true that we are now on our way there."

As the Troop members began to see through her deduction, they jeered and joked about it. Mr. Gilroy laughed and added:

"That's just like a Troop of girls! you start out to go somewhere, and you turn and twist around, and criss-cross over and back again only to arrive at the starting point. Why not *get* there, and be done with it."

"What do you know about a Troop of girls?" demanded Joan, "an old bachelor, as you claim to be? you never had a girl in your whole life, and you're not a capable judge of them."

The laugh on Mr. Gilroy was finally interrupted

by the whistle of the engine, as it turned the curve in the road. A few minutes later the train pulled up beside the way station and the Troop, waving good-by to the rancher, who had accompanied them to the station, climbed up and sought for seats.

The next night, though it was too late for the scouts to be awake and know of the arrival, Rex Hamilton drove his sporty looking car up in front of the hotel and inquired for Mr. Fairfax, Junior. Then he asked the hotel porter to direct him to a nearby garage.

Faxy had been expecting a telephone call in reply to his message sent the morning he got back to the city, and now he was pleasantly surprised to hear that his friend had arrived. In another few moments he was out on the curb shaking Rex's hands. Then they got back in the car and drove it to a garage for the night.

At breakfast, in the morning of the day the Troop planned to start for their mountain adventures in the Sierras, they were pleasantly surprised to find Rex seated at their table and waiting for them. Then followed a chatter as of a flock of magpies.

"And what is the answer to all this Babel?" called Mr. Gilroy, holding up a hand for silence, that he might be heard.

"Oh! Rex tells us that three of the nicest boys

he knows in Hollywood can't get off right now," said Joan.

"He just finished his picture, day before yesterday, and rushed away to join us here," explained Julie.

"And the pity of it is, Gilly, that each one of those three detained boys owns a dandy car!" sighed Judith.

"That won't save us any money now, seeing that the cars will be in Hollywood," laughed Mr. Gilroy.

"No; but Rex says the boys promised to come along later and join us somewhere else. They are going to let Rex know where and when," declared Judith eagerly.

The Captain seemed to be serious after she heard this news, and her husband asked her the cause of her concern.

"Well, you see, there is so much romance connected with motion picture heroes, that I do not feel very calm at the idea of having so many of them join our party. Rex is all right, and I can keep my eyes on eight girls with but four beaux; but not more than that."

"It would make you cross-eyed, eh?" laughed her husband.

"All joking aside, Dear, I feel like washing my hands of the consequences, if the girls persist in attaching other movie stars."

"There 'ain't going to be no consequences', Captain," was Mr. Gilroy's laughing assurance.

"Will you assume all of them then?" demanded she.

"Yes, I will! and without any extra worry or work, either," said he.

"All right! I'll play chaperon, but you will have to be IT," threatened the Captain.

"A simple matter. If the scouts show signs of getting the bit between their teeth, I'll just drive them into a corral and put up a rail. Then I'll park the beaux in a ring by themselves, see."

His way of planning how to make the young folks behave amused the Captain tremendously, and she forgot her worry in laughing at Mr. Gilroy's plan.

As if in answer to fervent desires voiced by the Troop while at the Redwood Camp, the Hendersons and Fairfaxes had decided to join the Troop on the visit to Lake Tahoe. This included their two fine automobiles, and so the owners of the cars insisted that the vacant seats in their seven passenger cars be utilized by the scouts.

The forenoon that all was ready for the departure for Lake Tahoe, the string of automobiles that lined up in front of the hotel attracted general attention. Not only because of their luxurious appearances, but also because it could be seen that the luggage packed here and there suggested a long drive.

Rex managed to get Judith in front beside him, and Faxy got Julie and her sister in the back seat. The Captain decided that Betty was serious enough a guardian for any two lively scouts, hence she made no protests, and Mr. Gilroy agreed with her.

In the Fairfax car sat Mrs. Fairfax on the back seat, and her husband at the wheel. There were five vacant seats therefore, and these were taken by Mrs. Vernon and four of the girls.

In the Henderson car went Junior, who drove, and Joan beside him. In the back sat Mr. and Mrs. Henderson and Mr. Vernon, with extra baggage piled up in the extra space in front of them.

Mr. Gilroy had hired a small roadster, so now he and Tally filled up all spare room with luggage and then got in.

Rex driving the speediest car led the way out of San Francisco, and sped along the road to Sacramento, where the Wishbone Auto Road leads to Tahoe. The merry group of friends, in the leading car, laughed and chattered as Rex "stepped on the gas" and ran the risk of being arrested by the officers stationed along this well-travelled auto road.

After reaching the open country and seeing a clear road ahead, Rex spoke of a visit to Mt. Shasta, where he had played the lead in a picture, which needed snow-clad mountains as a background.

"We drove by a route which ran through the Valley of the Sacramento River, a distance of about 239 miles by motor from Sacramento to the mountains. The drive was not very agreeable, because of the hot winds, the flies and mosquitoes, and many other pests which come from the irrigated lands all about that section.

"At length we reached the upper end of the Valley, where we found vast orchards of peaches, apricots, figs, olives, limes, oranges and almonds flourishing better than they do in our southern orchards.

"From the north end of the Valley we entered the gorge of the Sacramento. The trail now led us across the river, which, far below us, seemed to crawl like a silvery serpent over its rocky bed.

"Next we came to Shasta Springs and stopped to drink the water, which is said to be so salubrious. One good long quaff sufficed me for all my life! I dare say the mineral qualities are guaranteed to produce Eternal Youth for one who drinks daily, but I am not one to win the reward by such disagreeable means. That one sip was strong enough to cure me of all ills of the flesh."

The disgusted expression of Rex's face made the girls laugh and sympathize with him.

"We put up at the hotel, which had to be reached by an incline railway. From the hotel we proceeded daily to get our pictures. At the base of

the mountain the forests and fields, and the general scenery often furrowed by lava ridges, looks much like any other mountain base. But once you begin the ascent of the peak, you discover that you are climbing a more perilous mountain than any of the peaks in the Sierras.

"We climbed on horseback, since we were told that that was the safest and easiest way to gain the summit. We started out from Sisson and, climbing all day, reached timberline before dark. Here we pitched camp and early in the morning left on foot, to haul our camera and other outfits to the peak. The horses were left with one guide; the other guide we had with us, to lead the way.

"It took us about eight hours to get to the top of Mt. Shasta, a height of 14,000 feet. Here we found steaming springs rising from the loose shale and lava scattered about, and strange contrast! nearby we saw the snow of the crater, which is a mile wide and about 2500 feet in depth. We could hear distinctly, at times, the warning rumbles deep down in the bowels of the volcanic peak, as if to let us know that we were trespassers and that the enmity of its fires had not been quenched, but were waiting for the signal to have a great upheaval once more.

"From the crest of the peak we could see the entire country for miles and miles around us—an un-

interrupted view of Mt. Diablo to Lassen Peak and the Trinity Range. That view was worth all the climbing and trouble and danger to gain the summit of Shasta."

"Wouldn't Gilly be happy if he could delve about in the debris of that crater," said Betty.

"Yes," agreed Julie quickly, "but we are more interested in hearing of the pictures you got up on that peak, Rex, than we are in thinking of Gilly's collection."

"If you girls saw the famous film picture called 'Divorce,' which has been released recently, you'll remember the hot springs and the snow-filled crater? That was it," said Rex.

"The little Arena Theatre of Elmertown never gets a picture until it is worn into streaks by being used all over the country," complained Joan.

"We'll see 'Divorce' next year, Rex; I'll promise you; unless we see it elsewhere than in Elmertown," laughed Julie.

"Well, that thrilling fight on the brink of the crater was staged and taken on Mt. Shasta. It was a *real* slap that I gave the villain in the story, because he had been very disagreeable to the girls on the climb up the peak, and it was the only way I had of showing him what I thought of him. In the scenario, I was supposed to fight and finally win the victory over him; but I acted the part with such

fervor that the rascal went right over backwards into the deep snow of the crater. Strange to say, at the same time, the old volcano made an awful complaint, by thundering up from the bottom of her heart, and the ground upon which we stood trembled with the vibrations of the rumblings. You should have seen the villain scramble out of that pit and stare around for a safe place in which to hide himself. We laughed at him to our hearts' content then."

"It must be lots of fun to play in the Movies," said Julie.

"It is! I'd rather work in the movies than do anything else I know of," declared Rex.

The road now became difficult to travel and Rex gave his attention to his driving. Travelling by the lower road, which passes Folsom and Placerville, the scouts had glimpses of the famous places they had read about, in the old mining days of the Stampede.

Next they crossed the American River, a swift, sullen-looking torrent; then they were repeatedly thrilled by unexcelled views of mountains, cascades, deep-gorged valleys, and nestling villages, or summer camps of the beautiful Sierras.

At last they began to climb the final ascent of that mountain upon whose bosom sleeps the pure little Lake Tahoe. On the Californian side of the

lake is Tahoe City; the easterly shore of the lake is in Nevada, though this state owns but one-third of the lake-shore, California owning the other two-thirds.

Rex drove up to Tahoe Tavern and stopped with a graceful short-cut to the front of the hotel. The other cars came up soon afterwards, and then the motorists entered the Tavern to refresh themselves. All felt stiff after such a long drive, and all were thankful to get rid of the dust and grit which had covered them on the roads leading to the Lake.

CHAPTER X

THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENS

THE fatigue occasioned by the long auto trip to Lake Tahoe was forgotten after refreshing baths and a delicious supper in the pleasant dining room of the Tavern. Then the Troop declared itself ready for new diversions. Since the sparkling waters of the Lake beguile all tourists to come and admire its serene beauty, the scout party decided to visit it by night, and then return again at dawn to see the sun rise over the sheet of water.

"How wonderful the dark-blue heavens look, when reflected in this mirror," murmured Julie, spellbound by the silent beauty of the lake with the myriads of stars shining in the sky, seeming to be reversed and to be gazing up from the depths of the waters at the members of the Troop.

"How beautiful it must look in early morning, when reflecting the rising sun and the snow-capped peaks around it," added the Captain.

"We must engage our seats on one of the boats that takes tourists around the 'Big Water', as the Indians named this gem of a lake," suggested Mr. Vernon.

"That's just what it is, isn't it?" said Joan. "A rare gem, like a pure white diamond set in platinum prongs—the snow-caps of the peaks being the high, old-fashioned setting."

"What a beautiful sentiment, Jo!" murmured Junior, close to her ear.

Anne Bailey, the prosaic member of the Scout Troop, saw Junior's suspicious proximity to Joan, but she failed to hear what he had said. Hence she laughingly replied to Joan's poetic fancy, by saying: "Some folks can't wear rings of any kind without having them turn their skin green. This diamond, in the high-pronged setting just mentioned by Joan, would prove to be rather troublesome to a housewife in her kitchen. Imagine catching those sharp prongs in the dish-cloth; or tearing off a bit of sticky fly-paper by ramming a point into the gum."

Everyone laughed at Anne's speech, and Julie added: "Maybe that's why this ring of a lake turned all its shores so green! Just like one who has too much acid in her composition."

Joan frowned, because all the sentiment had been robbed from her poetic idea. But the other scouts giggled at Julie's words.

After remaining for a short time to watch the changing colors of black, dark-blue, and the starry

points of gold in the surface of the lake the Troop started back for the Tavern.

There being enough young people to provide partners for a dance, it was Judith's suggestion that they enjoy a few rounds before retiring for the night. There were the four young beaux, the four "elderly men," and the members of the Scout Troop to dance. Mr. Gilroy said he was too tired to think of dancing, and the girls instantly pooh-poohed such nonsense. They even tried to drag him to his feet, to enthuse him with energy, but to no avail.

The four gallants were soon paired for the dance with Julie, Joan, Judith and Amy; the other girls were waiting for the four men, who had inclinations directly opposed to whirling or prancing around the room to the rhythm of the electric organ. At last, however, the Captain urged her husband to get up and make a stand against his self-indulgence.

"I'll dance with Anne if the other men promise to dance with the rest of the girls," said Mr. Gilroy, his very frank words making them all laugh.

"Come on then, Gilly," urged Anne, taking his arm and imbuing him with *her* desire to join the dancers.

Finally the whole Troop was dancing, Mrs. Fairfax and Mrs. Henderson excepted. They preferred to sit and smile at the funny attempts of their hus-

bands to perfect the new steps which the girls tried to teach them.

Just as the party began to swing into the spirit of the fun the organ suddenly ceased playing. "It wants another nickel!" called Mr. Gilroy.

"Hurry over and feed it to the poor thing," advised Mr. Vernon, now as eager to continue his whirligig as previously he was anxious to be excused.

A click, a stroke of a gong, and the music resumed exactly where it left off for want of automatic financial nourishment. The party and the organ had attracted a couple to the open doorway of the room, and the youth, an awkward bridegroom of about twenty-five, with his country bride of twenty, entered and showed a disposition to dance.

No one happened to notice them, so the couple began to dance the old-fashioned glide waltz. They were ideally happy and their eyes saw naught but the face of each other, as they glided and turned and dipped in the waltz-step popular fifty years ago. But they were not careful of direction, hence they threatened a collision with the other dancers several times. These were averted by a swift dodge of the couple aware of the danger; but the country couple were serenely ignorant of all this.

Then came Mr. Gilroy and Anne. He was not

accomplished enough in dancing to avert a calamity, and the awkward country pair paid scant attention to anything other than themselves. Fortunately for Gilly's tender toes, the ranchman had left his hob-nailed ranch boots home, when he came on this honeymoon with his "gal". But he had powerful big feet at that, and now one of those feet came down squarely upon Mr. Gilroy's nicely shod toes. The collision had come.

"Owouuh!" cried an agonized voice, and Anne was dropped suddenly. Mr. Gilroy tried to get his toes up in his hands to ease the shooting pains, but he found himself unable to balance in that position, and the next moment he was sprawled out upon the floor.

The ranchman stopped also, and came over to offer his assistance to the fallen man. In doing so, he grabbed Mr. Gilroy under both arms and half-lifted, half dragged him to his feet again.

"What happened to you-all, mister?" asked the groom curiously, of the fallen hero.

"What happened?" shrilled Mr. Gilroy, forgetful of all but his suffering. "Why, you ought to know, with that great stone-crusher of a foot!"

But the rancher failed to connect the insult with his own pedals, and he turned away to confide to his bride: "That's a queer man, all right! I try to give him a hand and he yells at me."

Mrs. Fairfax overheard the remark, and she shook with laughter at the incident, since Mr. Gilroy was not injured—only hurt. But the encounter between the two strangers effectually ended the dance.

As Mr. Gilroy hobbled over to a seat beside the ladies, he said to Amy: "Go and ask for a rebate on that nickel! I didn't get my money's worth out of it."

The next morning, the Troop having visited the Lake at sunrise and now having returned to the Tavern were famished for food. At breakfast Mr. Vernon spoke of the day's plan.

"I'm told we can go to Mt. Tallac and climb to its summit and come back again before night."

"Oh, I know a better plan than that," added Mr. Fairfax. "I am told that we should hire horses and ride to Fallen Leaf Lake, where we can stop overnight at Hotel Tallac. From that starting point we make the ascent of the mountain and, reaching the summit by noonday, rest there and enjoy a picnic lunch on the top; then come back to the hotel by evening. The next day we can return to the Tavern. What say you all?"

"That is great, Dad," said Faxy, "but Rex says it does not take all day to ride to Fallen Leaf Lake. He says we can take the steamer trip around the lake this morning, see all the points of interest in

this circuit, and then ride away from the Tavern for Hotel Tallac. We will be in plenty of time for supper there to-night."

"You tourists just got here last night, and now you yearn to be off again to see some other lake," grumbled Mr. Gilroy.

"What did you want to do?" asked Julie.

"Why can't you postpone the Mt. Tallac climb until another day, and reserve this day for Lake Tahoe. I've heard that the trout fishing is wonderful in this lake."

"But the season doesn't open until June first," was Mr. Henderson's reminder. "I've asked about it."

"Ho! I beat you to it, then," laughed Mr. Gilroy. "I'm told that we can cross the lake, land on Nevada shores and fish all we like, since their fishing season opens May first, see?"

"Fine! The Nevada shores for us!" cried several male voices.

"We scouts like to fish, too, so you won't be able to get rid of us by crossing the lake to Nevada," declared Julie.

"Which would you boys prefer to do: ride to Fallen Leaf Lake and climb Mt. Tallac, or cross Lake Tahoe and fish from the Nevada shore for trout?" asked Joan.

"Ah, say!" begged Rex, "go easy on a chap,

can't you? We all like to go trout fishing, and you said you did too. Why not all go across and have that sport, then go on to Fallen Leaf Lake another day?"

"Of course! That is sound sense!" declared the men. The scouts had to capitulate then, and it was settled to cross Lake Tahoe that morning and visit the Nevada shore to seek for a good trout pool. Since it would be better to remain over-night on the other side of the Lake, the men asked the proprietor of the Tavern to recommend a hotel where they might stay.

After taking the round trip on the lake steamer the Troop arranged with the Captain to let them go ashore at the Glenbrook landing. This place has been made famous by visiting fishermen, who yearn to go trout fishing before the regular season opens in California. The Nevada law permitting trout fishing a month earlier in the season is enough to drive all the fish from the waters on the Nevada shore!

The hotel accommodations were good, and the next morning after arriving, the entire party started off to begin their angling. In spite of fine tackle and concentrated efforts, the results of the first day's pleasure were *nil* so far as trout were concerned, but wonderful if you considered the sun-

burned faces, necks and arms, and the countless red blotches caused by the bites of insects.

That night a man at the hotel advised the Troop to try their luck in several of the trout streams adjacent to Lake Tahoe.

"You can hire a depot wagon of any farmer hereabouts, to drive you to one of the pools, or streams, which simply swarm with the big trout that will not come out into the lake."

"Girls, we think it will be much better for you to stay near the lake to-morrow, while we go and inspect these streams. If we meet with any luck, we will send one of the boys back to bring you over for the afternoon," suggested Mr. Gilroy.

"I don't see what is going to prevent us from going with you to the other places to fish," grumbled Julie.

The Captain realized that the men wished to spend a day alone, relieved of the society of the scouts, and she instantly silenced Julie by a look.

"If the silly males think they can catch more fish with us away, let them try it!" declared Joan angrily. "We'll show them!"

Rex had attached himself to the man who had advised the fishermen in the Troop to try another stream and, having secured all the information he wished to learn, he returned to his friends with plenty of advice regarding roads and the best pools.

"We'll go in our cars," decided the owners of the autos. "That will save a lot of time along the road. If we hire a man with a team, we may be hours arriving at the place your advisor described for us to visit."

Therefore the scout girls remained at the hotel and, having watched the male division of their party start away in high spirits for the promised Mecca for trout, finally went down to the Lake to try once more to angle for fish.

Strange to say, this time the trout seemed over-anxious to play with and be caught by the girls. In a few short hours, therefore, they had a basket well-filled with beautiful trophies of their skill and they became too elated to remain longer to fish.

"I only hope the silly men haven't had a single strike," wished Julie fervently.

"They won't get back to the hotel until sundown, will they, Verny?" asked Judith.

"Not unless they had such luck as we have had in fishing. If that is the case, they might start home sooner," replied the Captain.

As they reached the hotel an old fisherman met them and expressed surprise at the beauties he saw in the basket. "I never saw a finer mess of trout, young ladies," was his compliment paid to their ability.

"It was sheer dumb luck!" laughed Julie, as he went on his way.

"I feel certain it was our reward for remaining here, when we really wanted to go there and fish," added Joan.

After reaching the hotel, the scouts bathed and dressed and then they waited for the members of their party to return. The sun went down, and twilight spread over Lake Tahoe, still the male portion of the Troop came not.

"They must have had wonderful sport, to remain so long," said the Captain.

"Or else they had none at all, and are trying different streams in order to catch something to bring back as a showing," was Julie's version of their absence.

"When they do get here, I suppose we'll hear all about 'the beauty we *almost* caught, weighing over ten pounds, yes-sir!'" mimicked Joan, and her friends all laughed merrily.

At this moment the hotel manager called Mrs. Vernon to the telephone. As she left the girls, she said: "I hope they are all right. Maybe they will have to remain overnight at Lake Independence, where they said they might go, if luck was bad in the streams along the Lake shore."

She went to answer the call, and the girls talked eagerly of what the news might be.

"Maybe their boat upset and they have to have their clothes dried before returning here," ventured Judith.

"I just bet they didn't catch a single fish, and they're ashamed to come back without trying again tomorrow," said Anne.

Mrs. Vernon now returned and seemed relieved. "It's all right, girls. They're late, but they'll be here about nine o'clock. Gilly telephoned and advised us to have supper without them."

"Of course we will, if they are not going to get here 'til nine o'clock," said Julie.

"And best of all, girls, they never had a strike! Gilly is disgusted, I could hear that. I told him of the wonderful luck we had, and he mumbled something about a hold-up, but I couldn't understand. When I asked him to repeat what he said, he replied: 'Oh, I'll tell you all about that when we get there.' "

The scouts were pleased with the news and now they went in and enjoyed a delicious supper; then they went out to the verandah to watch the reflections of the night skies upon the mirrored face of the lake.

It was past ten before the automobiles were heard chugging up the grade to the hotel porch. Then the group of fishermen got out and came up the steps to join their friends. The cars were taken

to the garage and soon the drivers returned to join their friends. The scouts had failed to notice in the darkness when the automobiles drove up to the Tavern, that several unfamiliar cars were with those belonging to their friends. But they now saw a group of strangers approaching with Mr. Gilroy and his comrades of the fishing trip. That these strangers seemed to be ignored by the fishermen, but lagged behind with Rex, who was chatting with them, impressed the scouts as being unusual. Still, the sight of three good-looking young chaps in company with Rex pleased the girls.

"Why!" exclaimed the Captain, gazing at the fishermen for a glimpse of their hampers and trout, "didn't you catch *any* fish at all?"

"Fish!" was Mr. Gilroy's scornful reply. "We didn't go fishing."

"What do you mean?" asked several scouts in one voice.

"Exactly what I said: not one of us ever reached that lake, or the streams recommended by the man yesterday. Ask Rex. He knows all about it, and his friend was the man who *hoaxed* us into making a scene of ourselves," chuckled Mr. Vernon.

"A scene! that's just it! I can't afford to have all my friends laugh forever over such a scene," grumbled Mr. Gilroy.

The very fact of the always jolly and good-

natured Gilly being in such an irritable frame of mind surprised the scouts. Then Mrs. Vernon asked her husband in a low voice to explain what had happened.

"It didn't exactly happen, my dear," laughed he softly, "because to happen, a thing must come unexpectedly upon one. This outing was all planned and so it was expected by some—not by us. I must not speak of it now, while Gilly is near enough to hear, but I'll explain as soon as he is gone. He says he is going right to bed and dream of the awful insult to his self-respect. Let him go, then I can explain what happened to prevent our fishing to-day."

Mr. Gilroy saw Rex about to introduce the other members in his party—the strangers who had come in with him. So he hastily bid the Troop goodnight and went to his room. Once he was heard going down the corridor leading to his own chamber, his friends got together in the big living-room of the hotel and listened to the telling of the day's experiences by Mr. Vernon.

"But first, let Rex introduce his associates from Hollywood," suggested Mr. Vernon, as they turned to greet the young actor.

This information came as a surprise to the scouts, because they had no idea that these new-comers might be the group of screen artists of whom Rex had spoken some time previously. But the bit of

news was welcome to those members of Dandelion Troop that had lacked individual entertainment from youthful gallants. This now promised to be changed, and it only remained to be told how long the stars expected to travel in company with the Troop.

Rex beckoned his comrades to come forward and then he proceeded to introduce them to the waiting members of the Troop-party. So eager were the girls to get acquainted with the strangers and to find out about their plans for the immediate future, that Mr. Vernon found little interest or curiosity expressed by them for his story. Therefore he spoke in an aside to his wife.

"Our yarn of all that happened to-day can wait for morning, I think." But the Captain shook her head emphatically.

"No! you started to explain, and the girls have no right to give their attention to others now. I'll see that they listen."

Consequently she called her scouts to order, and they left getting better acquainted with Rex's friends until another opportunity.

They gathered about Mr. Vernon, with the screen artists at the back of the group, and Mr. Vernon explained how they came to be diverted from the fishing excursion.

CHAPTER XI

THE CAUSE OF GILLY'S GROUCH

"Rex declares that he knew nothing of the incident that has caused such a disturbance in Gilly's heart. But Rex might be anxious to excuse himself in this plot, lest he be dismissed from the Troop, and sent back in disgrace to Hollywood," began Mr. Vernon.

Rex protested that he was an innocent victim of the plot, just as his friends of that fishing excursion were.

"Let *us* judge you, but now do let V. go on with his story," said Joan impatiently. So Rex asked pardon and kept quiet thereafter.

"To begin at the start, then," said Mr. Vernon, "we drove along the road following Rex's lead and trusted him implicitly to bring us to the trout stream of which the fisherman of yesterday bragged. We could not help speaking of the condition of the roads over which our machines were bumping, but we thought that they were due to the fact that only those individuals wishing to find good fiishing in the inlets or streams along the Lake ever travelled this way.

"Well, we had been travelling for some time before Fairfax called our attention to the surprising fact that Rex was turning off to a very poor country lane. In the car with Rex were Junior, Faxy and John, also Mr. Gilroy. We men drove in Fairfax's machine.

"We sounded the siren and shouted to Rex to halt and explain why he was leaving the only decent road for motoring. I was about to explain that his chosen direction seemed to lead away from the lake. Then we drove up beside his car and asked what could be wrong with his bump of location.

" 'S-sh!' he warned us, holding up a warning finger. Then he nodded his head in the direction of the main road from which we had turned, and now we thought we heard voices in high dispute.

" 'What is it—I didn't see anyone down that road?' said I, trying to peer through the heavy growth of woods.

" 'That's why we turned off as quickly and quietly as we could. We knew you would follow, but we hoped you would not call or make a sound. I fear your shouting and the echo of the siren has been heard by those men down that road. They look like a lot of outlaws, and it isn't a very pleasant experience to meet a gang of hoboes on a lone country road,' explained Rex, in a very concerned tone of voice."

"Girls, let me say this much now: Rex sure has selected his right profession," explained Mr. Fairfax, with an amused manner, "He is such a fine actor that we never doubted his sincerity until we realized that we had been victimized by his zeal for this picture."

The Troop of scouts now began to suspect something of that which took place and they smiled in anticipation of the rest of the tale about to be told.

"Well," resumed Mr. Vernon, to the interested listeners, "it developed that we *had* been overheard by the ruffians. And it also developed that they felt desirous of making our acquaintance. Had Gilly only remained quietly in the car with Rex, he would not have played so prominent a part in the forth-coming film. But he, in his desire to spare the rest of us any unpleasantness, in the inevitable encounter with the group of outlaws now approaching our cars from back of the screen of trees, placed himself directly in line with the camera, which was hidden from our sight somewhere over beside the main road.

"We conferred quickly and agreed that it would be safer for us to get out of the automobiles and use them, if necessary, as shields. We suspected these rough-looking men of having revolvers or knives, because they looked exactly like a gang of drunken miners; and here were we without any

protection other than our fishing tackle and the lunch baskets. We were not aware at that time that Gilly had his automatic revolver in his pocket. But we discovered this fact at the crucial moment. That moment came when the camera man shouted: 'Hold that.' It was too late then to hold Gilly, and we were so horrified at what took place at that same moment that we paid little heed to any discovery of camera or director after that.

"As I said, we got out of the machines and Rex came over to advise us to hunt for clubs or any weapon of defence that could be found nearby.

" 'I'll take the big wrench,' declared Henderson, delving quickly into the tool-box under the seat, and bringing out a heavy mechanician's tool. Rex looked a bit frightened, but said nothing.

"I found an enormous bit of pine which had been broken from a tree beside the road. This had been stripped by the storms and now was smooth and easy to swing. I know how to swing a bit of timber, too, and I felt amply protected. The one concern of my mind was those young chaps: I could see how eager they felt to enter a fray, and I hinted to Fairfax and Henderson that they must insist upon the boys keeping back of us. If there was to be any fighting let us old timber-jacks do it. We three men felt that we were able to hold a whole mob at bay, with our pine clubs and the arm muscle

we could show. Besides this, the outlaws were too drunk to use many wits, even had they had any."

"That's pretty hard on these Stars," laughed Mr. Fairfax.

"They deserve all we can say, and they know it," added Mr. Henderson, nodding his head at the smiling group of Hollywood men.

"Well," continued the narrator, "the band of highwaymen stood still, when they reached a point a few yards from us, and we could see that all four bore unmistakable signs of being tough characters. One of them, with bleary eyes and sputtering tongue, seemed to be the ring-leader of his gang. He lunged forward a few steps and began to demand that we move away from the automobiles and get together in a group at a distance from our cars.

Mr. Gilroy stood his ground right in the middle of the road, and he called over his shoulder to us to remain just where we were and let him handle the rascals.

" 'Yuh git back thar wid them udders, yuh fresh Tenderfoot!' shouted one of the outlaws, 'er yuh'll git yur skin punctured!'

" 'I will, will I?' snarled Gilly, sticking his hand down into his pocket without our having any idea of there being a gun in that pocket. We believed it was one of his feints to frighten the toughs away.

" 'Yah, we will, will us!' sneered the spokesman of the four.

" 'See here, Gilly,' now called Rex, from back of his car, 'Suppose we all rush them at one time? There are eight of us against four drunks.'

" 'Drunks, air we?' shrilled one of the four ruffians. 'Come on, yuh dandies, and see us knock yuh over an' mek yuh bite the dust!'

"All this time I had been watching keenly to see if they made any move to get any guns from their pockets and aim them; but I felt encouraged when I realized that the only weapons they had were their fists. If they were as unsteady as their appearances testified for them, and if they were as unfit for a sober man's club as their habits and unkempt looks would suggest, the attack of eight well-developed clear-headed men would rout them in short order. Then we would compel them to let us bind their hands and drive them to the nearest village on the way to Independance Lake.

"But we reckoned without knowing the plot of the scenario;—without even a hint that all this was staged by a clever director now hidden back of the roadside trees.

"One of the toughs caught up an enormous stone from the ground and instead of throwing it he rolled it directly at Gilly's feet. He, for the moment, thrown off guard by watching the direction

of the missile, jumped aside to avoid it and in that moment the four outlaws rushed.

"We started to defend our friend, but strange to say not one of the four rascals harmed Gilly, though one of them caught hold of his shoulders from behind and held him from getting away, or from removing his hands from his pockets. The other three came for us.

"The four boys now ran to our aid, and danced or yelled around us as they waved their arms and seemed to act like maniacs, instead of four athletes trying to save their elders in times of need.

"Just then a swell car sped over the road which we had left, and three fine young chaps saw in a glance all that was taking place, put on the brakes, and sprang from their machine to run over and throw themselves upon the outlaws.

"Now, you see, the picture would have reeled itself off exactly as it had been planned, and every one of Rex's new friends, as well as his old ones, would have enjoyed seeing themselves in a Movie some time next Fall—but Gilly had to go and add a touch of realism to the acting. That's what makes him so grouchy now."

At these words the men who had acted in that exciting experience nodded their heads in emphasis and then Mr. Vernon continued his story.

"Gilly had managed to wriggle himself half free

from the grasp of the tough who held him hitherto; and the tough, seeing in his mind's eye the end of that roll of film, became careless of consequences; hence it followed, in the flash of an eye, that Gilly having yanked his gun out of the pocket, freed himself by leaving his coat in the hands of the outlaw; now he sprang back and suddenly aimed at the man who had held him.

"In another second's time, before Rex or others could explain or stop it, the gun went off, the outlaw screamed and rolled in the dust, and all was pandemonium. The three assailants who were about to be mastered by the young men just coming into the scene, as well as Rex and our three boys with him, all forgot the defence of us four respectable men and made for the man whom Gilly had shot in the leg.

"Gilly, so elated at his work, dared take aim at the other three ruffians, but they quickly held up their hands and cried to him to wait!

" 'Here, Rex, and you boys there!' yelled Gilly, dancing about in his excitement, 'get busy and rope those demons securely. Go get rope from the automobiles—Fairfax has a coil in the box at the back of his machine. Meanwhile I'll keep them covered and see that they do not get away or double-cross us.'

"Rex laughed hoarsely, but he ran and did as he

had been told. He rushed back with the coil of wash-line and quickly began to rope the hands of the tamed rascals. He was assisted in this work by all the rest of us. Finally the three outlaws were secured, and we were left to deal with the unconscious man.

"So intent were we over the prostrate tough, now groaning in agony, that we failed to see a man with a medicine case come quickly from the screen of woods across the main road; not till he joined our group and spoke, were we aware of his presence.

" 'Make room for me boys,' said he, kneeling down beside the injured man and hastily slitting the cloth of the old ragged trousers with a sharp scalpel.

"We recognised a professional surgeon now, and we gazed at each other in surprise. Whence came he, and how did he get there?

"In a short time he had removed the outer rags and to our amazement we saw that the outlaw wore very expensive under-garments of silk. We stared at each other and then we saw that Rex and the young strangers had so placed themselves as to screen best from the road—or to be more exact, to keep the camera from reproducing anything which would not have been consistent in a picture. Of this fact, however, we were not aware.

"The surgeon found the bullet lodged right under the knee-cap and he shook his head over the dis-

covery. Then he placed a couple of sticks alongside the leg-bone and bandaged the wound to protect it should an unforeseen accident take place again.

" 'We'll have to carry him to one of the cars and rush him off to some hotel where I can operate,' said the doctor, looking up at us. Then he added with a frown: 'Who the devil had a gun, anyway?'

" 'This brave man here,' replied Fairfax. 'He was the only one armed, but we did not know he had a revolver; perhaps the outlaws would have been more careful had they known it.'

" 'Well, such negligence shown by these other actors, in preventing him from shooting Old Theodore means that one of our Stars will be laid up for weeks. That bullet may have split the patella, or even splintered the joint. I can't say until I get him in a decent place where I can examine the wound,' was the verdict of the surgeon.

"At this stage of the hold-up we saw a few well-dressed men coming from the screen of woods beyond the roadside and draw near us. They were talking and excitedly approving something or someone. We stood staring at these new-comers and I wondered if they were fishermen, who, having heard the shot, were coming to ask the cause of this unusual hold-up.

"As they reached speaking distance one of the men called, 'That was the best bit of acting we've

had in a long time. The way this gentleman played his part and popped the toy pistol, and the way you all registered fear and surprise when Theodore rolled over in the dust, and the keen solicitude expressed by Dr. Adams, all go to make a very realistic picture.'

" 'Me—keen solicitude?' snapped the doctor, impatiently. 'It means a genuine case. It wasn't a toy gun at all, but a genuine revolver, and a genuine bullet lodged in the poor chap's knee.'

"Slowly we began to understand that the entire hold-up had been staged and was meant for the Movies. Even Rex acted amazed at the revelations; but we still believe that he and our boys with him knew all about the plan, for they certainly acted like actors in a play, instead of devoted sons ready to sacrifice their lives for our safe guarding. Now that I think of it, I seem to see them again in my mind's eye, keeping well within the focus of the camera, and trying to avoid confusion by mixing up too closely with the outlaws, eh?"

To Mr. Vernon's suspicions, Rex vehemently declared his innocence, and the scouts laughed at the result of the fishing excursion. But the poor man! where was he now?

"We drove on to the hotel at Independence Lake and there we've left the patient and his doctor. One of the men had to stay to help act as nurse for

Theodore. We are going to wire for an ambulance to come for him and take him to one of the nearest hospitals," explained Rex.

"No wonder Gilly is furious," said the Captain. "I would start action at once, were I in his place, and enjoin you people from producing that picture. You have no right to use persons who have not been told of what would take place; and it is simply a case of justice that one of your party was injured. It's too bad that the rest of you escaped without a scratch."

Such a denunciation from the usually kind and forgiving woman caused all that knew her to wonder. Mr. Vernon hastened to say a word now.

"My dear, the camera men are not to be blamed for taking the pictures. They believed that a number of 'extras' had been engaged to play the part of the Tenderfeet; even the doctor hurried to the scene of the attack, believing the gun to have been a toy, and the injured man playing a part. The whole plan made by the Film Company miscarried, because the hired actors, who were to play in the scene, took the wrong turn in the road and never showed up until we were in our cars ready to continue on our way to the little hotel near the Lake.

"Then it all came out: we actually played the part for the 'extras'; and so splendid did we perform

those parts that the director and the cameramen agreed to give us a contract any time in the future should we be without a job. I am flattered by being told that I film splendidly, and in the pictures, look like a handsome man."

Mr. Vernon's words and manner made them all laugh.

"I hope and pray that Gilly won't insist upon 'killing' the picture," declared Joan.

"How I should love to see that scene!" added Julie.

"Well, to please you all, I will have my man develop the film and we'll try to show you the whole scene to-morrow morning—if the hotel manager can arrange a dark room for us," suggested the director.

The manager who had been an interested listener to the story agreed to do all that was required, and so the entire party separated and went to their rooms to retire for the night.

The following morning, when all was pronounced ready to show the film, Gilly was persuaded to accompany the Troop to the darkened room, to sit and see himself act in the Movies. He was curious to see what he looked like on the screen, yet he rebelled at having been made a tool unwittingly.

The film began to unroll and the audience sat and watched intently. It was very amusing to the girls,

to see their friends pictured on the sheet, and it was very interesting to the party of fishermen on that excursion, which ended so unexpectedly for all, to watch themselves as the picture reproduced faithfully every action.

Now when Mr. Gilroy saw himself courageously facing four ruffians, and he realized that the way he handled them was an honor instead of a disgrace to his manhood, he changed his mind about continuing his grouch. Therefore long before the film was finished he was his smiling self again.

And the director was told that he might use the film!

CHAPTER XII

STARS JOIN THE TROOP

A FEW days spent at Lake Tahoe, during which time the representatives from Hollywood completely won over any personal prejudices from the members of the Dandelion Auxiliary members, and then the large party separated: The Troop, having annexed Rex Hamilton's three associates, started in their cars for Mt. Tallac, and the picture director with his other men started back for Los Angeles.

It was up on Mt. Tallac that Mr. Gilroy heard a tourist praising the beauties of Feather River Canyon, and advise him to take his party to visit the spot.

"You'll never regret it, sir," said the enthusiastic tourist. "After travelling through vast olive orchards, you gradually ascend the grade which leads up to the big power plant which furnishes electric current for San Francisco.

"After leaving there you continue along the banks of the river which now rims a narrow gorge with its sharp turns and bends. A narrow-gage railway follows the road like a steel serpent gliding on its way up the mountainside.

"The Plumas River, so-called by the Spaniards, received its name because that territory and the side-streams of the river, yielded more than $10,000,000 worth of gold.

"If you want to visit a good mine, just go to Johnsville, in this mountain-land. Even if you care naught about mines, you'll be enthralled by the splendour of the primitive forests that reach right down to the road which is cut through cliffs, across ravines, bridges the rivers, and overcomes apparently insurmountable obstacles to man's progress. But we have done it!" concluded the tourist.

"How long would such a trip take us?" asked Mr. Vernon.

"Just as long as you chose to make it. I stopped at the hotel in Clio and took side trips all around that section; but you can do the main features in a day or so," explained the stranger.

They thanked the man for his information and then went their way, while he went his.

"As long as we are in the region suppose we go there, before leaving to return to Sacramento," suggested Mrs. Vernon. "One day more or less, now, will not make such a difference; but the fact that we have visited a place of such beauty will prove to be a satisfaction to us later."

Consequently the entire party motored to the place mentioned by the tourist, and no one had

cause to regret the extra time spent there. Then they turned back and drove to Sacramento, from which city they planned to turn southward and follow the trail through Galt, Lodi, Stockton and Oakdale, on the way to visit the Yosemite Valley and the Big Trees of the Sierra Mountains.

They stopped at Stockton overnight and resumed the motor trip in the morning. The day was bright and the members of the Troop felt happy and expectant of the wonderful things to be seen in the Yosemite.

"I see here, on this notice of printed rules," said Mr. Vernon, to his friends, "that the government is very strict concerning the tourists who visit the Park in their automobiles."

"Read them aloud to us, won't you?" asked Mr. Gilroy.

"It states that we must secure a permit, if we plan to use our cars within the boundary of the National Park. Also our permits must bear the name of the owners of the cars, the license numbers, name of drivers, and the recepit of having paid the $5 fee asked when entering the Park with the car."

"Well, that is very sensible, or the law-abiding public would be subjected to the annoyance of those who care little or nothing for the comforts or safety of others," ejaculated Mr. Gilroy.

"We'll have to enter the Valley by the Coulter-

ville Road it stipulates. By selecting the Big Oak Flat Road, as we have, we shall have to change our direction at Crane Flats. We'll have to let the others in the advance cars know this, or they may go right on," said Mr. Vernon.

The motorists had chosen the Big Oak Flat Road because it offered grander views, even though its heights averaged about 7,100 feet. So now, Mr. Vernon, whose car was the last in the line, urged his friend, Fairfax, who was driving, to speed up and overtake the others, to let them know about the rules.

It had been agreed that all would visit the Tuolumne Grove of Big Trees on the way to the Yosemite Park. So they stopped for luncheon at Priest's Hotel, and then drove on to visit the "Sequoias." The scouts had been expecting greater trees than those they had seen in the Redwoods, and now they felt a sense of disappointment upon entering Tuolumne Grove. But the immense trunks of these trees and the numbers of them, began to seem larger as time sped. It was after posing the Troop of Scouts against the base of the Illinois Tree, that the contrast between the size of the girls and the size of the Big Tree became most apparent. Its diameter is 28 feet.

The second group of Big Trees to be visited that day was the Merced Grove group.

"The average height of these Sequoias reach about 275 feet," read Mr. Gilroy, from a small booklet; "There are Big Trees in other groves which grow to a height of 325 feet and more. The average diameter of trees in Merced Grove is about 20 feet at the base."

"I don't see much difference between the trees in this grove or those of the last one," said Betty, disappointment plainly expressed in her voice.

"I think Betty is too anxious to visit Yosemite Valley, to be contented with looking at Big Trees," laughed the Captain.

"Yes, I must confess that I am very eager to get there," said Betty.

"So are we all, Captain," added several other voices.

"Then we will drive on and arrive at the hotel in time to rest up and get an early rise in the morning," suggested she.

The automobiles now followed the road to El Portal Road, which runs into the Valley of the Yosemite. From this place on it runs beside the Merced River, climbing slopes wooded with spruce and fir, then descending to plains and valleys covered with mansanita and bearberry bushes, finally straggling up to a crest which is about 6,000 feet above sea level.

Hardly does it attain this height, where one might

Visiting Glacier Point.

expect to take a good rest before going on, than it plunges right down the other side of the crest. This plunge gives tourists a wonderful view of the beauties about to be revealed in fuller details later on. But the Merced River, like a heartless flirt, turns away from her faithful old roadway and leaves it to go on its way alone.

Upon descending the down-slope of the peak, the girls caught glimpses of the eastern rim of the of the Yosemite Valley; then Rex pointed out Cloud's Rest, Half Dome, and Captain's Brow.

There was little said during the sight-seeing of these wonderful places, until the cars reached Cascade Falls. Here the tourists were afforded the grandest view of the entire Valley—a view of the glories of Nature. Now Rex acted as official announcer.

"Down below there, where you glimpse the two cataracts, namely: Bridal Veil and Ribbon Falls, it is a drop of 1,600 feet. Beyond them, to the left, is the Great Chief of the Valley, Tu-rock-anula; he is designated as the Wampum Bearer. Next you can get a glimpse of Three Brothers, who seem to be thrusting their heads forward to see what is going on down in the Valley."

"You mean they are anxious to have a look at Dandelion Scouts," corrected Julie.

"That's it!" laughed Rex; then he continued his

announcements: "In a crevice over there, next to Eagle Rock, you'll find Cho-lok, The Fall. It is the highest cataract to be seen here. Daringly facing Cho-lok stands Loya, the Sentinel. Then just beyond the Sentinel you can see the rim of Glacier Point. The Tenaya Canyon, upper fork of the Valley proper, starts at the base of those peaks, Half Dome and Cloud's Rest.

"Down through the gorge beyond you can catch sight of the bare or glistening peaks and verdure-clad sides of their slopes which dabble their feet in the clear waters of the river. Now we'll descend to the river-road, which passes Pohono Bridge, Bridal Veil Falls, Cathedral Rocks, and so on past El Captain, Eagle Peak, and the Ahwahnee settlement, which nestles at the foot of Sentinel Rock. There we find Sentinel Hotel, where you plan to stop to-night."

As Rex concluded, the Captain exclaimed: "Why, you speak as though you knew the place by heart."

"I do," said he. "I've visited this Valley several times and I love to come here and camp early in the Spring and late in Fall, when the mad rush of sight-seers does not annoy one."

That evening after supper had been enjoyed by the hungry Troop, Julie sighed and confessed a serious condition of her affairs. "You know, Captain, I haven't written a word for the column of

the *Elmertown Record* since the night I scribbled one off in such a hurry in San Francisco? It means our bread and butter for next summer, I fear, yet I haven't had one moment in which to sit down and write."

"Then you sit right down in the writing room here, Julie, and attend to that important duty," commanded Mrs. Vernon.

"Well, I will, if you girls will remove the beaux far from my sight and hearing," laughed Julie; "just leave Rex behind to quote official dates and points of interest to me, while I scribble."

"Rex! I'd better place the Yosemite Valley Guide at your hand for consultation. I cannot see Rex sitting here to help out the column for the *Elmertown Record,* when he can bask in Judith's smiles," exclaimed the Captain.

So Julie was given a volume of facts about the Valley and left to her own devices. Then she soon made up for her delinquencies of the past few weeks. When all was finished she looked it over and grinned at certain parts of the story she was to contribute to her home paper.

"It does read rather much like the Official Guide Book," murmured she, as she read aloud again:

"The Big Trees of the Sierra Nevada Mountains which we visited recently are located near a central line between the summits and the bases of the peaks

of the range. They grow at an average height of about 6,500 feet above sea level, and their territory stretches 250 miles north and south on the mountains of the Yosemite Valley Range. They are found in groups, and seldom do you find a solitary tree growing far from its family members.

"These Big Trees are supposed to be the scions of a great forest existing on the Sierras at an unknown time; because the groves still standing here and the erosions of great glaciers which the cleft canyons, such as the Tuolumne, Yosemite, and King's River Canyon, testify to this fact.

"The Giant Sequoias must have flourished in this their native land contemporaneous with the huge animals and monster reptiles of ages ago. The most northerly grove of Big Trees is found in Placer County, but they are not so notable as are some others for size. The next group southwards is the Calveras Grove. This was the first one to be made known to an amazed world. It contains about one hundred trees, some of very large dimensions, such as "Mother of the Forest" with a height of 325 feet, and a diameter of 32 feet. Then there is the Empire State Tree, and the Fallen Giant upon whose stump is built a dancing pavilion.

"In South Calveras Grove are about 1,000 trees.

"Tuolumne Grove is located on a small tributary of the Tuolumne River, and here are found large

and fine specimens of Big Trees. The road to Yosemite Park passes through this Grove.

"A few miles south of Tuolumne stands a small grove called Merced on the Moss Canyon. Here one can see splendid specimens of the Giants; but this grove is nothing in comparison with Mariposa Grove, located several miles southeast of Wawona.

"Here the Big Trees grow in a depression of the mountain ridge, on a tributary of the Merced River. This grove is easy to reach and well repays you for a visit, because it contains six hundred trees and is a grove four miles square. It is now a National Park and is under Government rules and orders.

"Grizzly Giant, height 224 feet, has a circumference of twenty feet, six inches measured 100 feet above the ground, where the limbs start. The circumference at the base of this giant is 104 feet. The tree is said to be at least 6,000 years old, and how much more no one knows.

"In this Grove a young Sequoia measures 17 feet at its base, and it is *only* a thousand years old. A mere trifle, or infant age for a young Sequoia. When it grows up to adult age, which will be ten thousand years hence, it will be as big and fine as its ancestors.

"Wawona Tree, with a diameter of 28 feet, and a height of 260 feet, has an arch cut right through its trunk. A four-in-hand and a large ranch wagon

can drive through this archway without touching its sides.

"Ten miles south of Mariposa Grove is another group of Big Trees, called Fresno Grove. It had about 600 trees when first discovered, the largest one measuring 83 feet in circumference at four feet above the ground; but a lumber company purchased and cut down these giants, to saw them into timbers. Such sacrilege!

"South of King's River is a belt of Sequoias, from three to four miles wide, and extending about 60 miles with but few breaks made by the deep canyons. This splendid belt of Big Trees has been given individual names for different sections.

"Thus: King's River Grove; Fresno Grove; Kaweah Grove; Tule River Grove, etc. Two Parks have been established by the Government in this great belt of Sequoias: General Grant Park, and the Sequoias Park. These are guarded by United States Cavalry, same as in Yosemite Park, throughout the season.

"Many of the largest and finest of these Big Trees have been scarred and injured by forest fires, but fires are now prevented by Forest Rangers. Also a dense growth of green vegetation which covers the ground, where the trees stand, protects them from fires.

"The majestic beauty and grace of the Sequoias

is unequalled by any tree known, and they are rightly said to be one of the wonders of the world. They inspire one with awe and admiration of Nature's great products, with their bright cinnamon brown color, and the long fluted trunk rising straight from the ground to the crown of emerald foliage which is more than a hundred feet above the earth."

Having reread her writing, Julie hurriedly slipped the sheets inside a long envelope and sealed it. Then she addressed and stamped it and ran to drop it into the mail box.

This done she stared around for her friends and was told by the smiling clerk, that they had gone to bed, and had left word for her to do likewise.

Since Julie had little choice in the matter, she said good-night to the clerk and retired to sleep.

CHAPTER XIII

YOSEMITE VALLEY AND A SURPRISE.

After enjoying a delicious breakfast the next morning, the Troop started off for a day in the Park. Tally accompanied them with kits well-packed with provender for a luncheon and supper, for they planned to have a picnic day of it, and Tally was to do the cooking and serving.

Tally sat in the car with Rex on this drive, and Joan, Judith and Julie sat in the back seat with the two boys, Junior and Faxy. Mrs. Vernon said it was ridiculous for so many to crowd into one automobile, when there were so many spare seats to be used. But the scouts preferred crowding, to separation.

As Rex drove along, Tally told of his visit to this Valley, one winter, while he was Guide to an Englishman, who was taking winter scenes with a camera.

"Us bunnel in mooch coat and fur an' mek way up gorge to clim' a top where we stan' where O-so-mai-ti Indians stan' one time. Here we stan' an' luk an' luk at heem valley down afront our feets—

down atween em big crags, where we see dimants shinin.'

"Alla peaks an' forreses an' plains shine of ice an' snow. Alla cat'racks an' ribers an' falls mek ice-lace veils. Downa Merced Riber she a white snake windin' through shiny peaks what mek blind Tally's eyes from mooch dimant shine. Mile an' mile of gorge we look over and see all shine,—back, fort,' right, left!" As he spoke, Tally described the dazzling scene with such intensity that the scouts could see it too.

"But it is June now, Tally, and the Yosemite has had to place her white furs in cold storage for the summer," remarked Joan.

"And those same 'dimants' are pawned until next winter," laughed Julie. "The Yosemite is spending the money she raised on her jewels, by extravagantly playing with the rivers, the falls, and cataracts, which the spring freshets have poured into her lap."

The Troop saw a perfect riot of wild flowers of every description, as well as of every color and perfume and form. Mosses and ferns were so beautiful that the girls simply *had* to gather as many as they could carry back to the hotel.

The first day's outing led them to the points of interest on the north and south walls, then to Tenaya Canyon. Mirror Lake, at the mouth of the Canyon,

proved that its name was well chosen, for it reflected perfectly all its surroundings in a calm, unruffled face of such clearness that it was a wonder where the real ended and the reflection began.

The Troop had been considering the advisability of hiring some camps, which are to be had in the Park at a certain price per day or week. But they were so weary by nighttime that they decided to return to the hotel again.

"Why waste time trying to chose a campsite for a week," said Mrs. Vernon, after they reached the hotel. "I think it will be better to go where we please and come back when we get ready. We need only pay for our rooms at this hotel for the time we are here."

"I agree with you, Captain," said Mr. Gilroy. "I heard to-day that there are good accommodations to be had at Soda Springs. I'd like to go there and get an early morning start to climb Mt. Dana."

"That sounds good to us, Gilly!" agreed Mr. Vernon.

"Then suppose we try that stunt and see how we like it," said Mr. Gilroy, glancing from one to another in his group.

The result was, that the Troop camped at a rented group of tents at Soda Springs that night and were off for Mt. Dana at daybreak. From the summit of this peak, which is 13,000 feet high,

they had such a marvelous view that they felt fully repaid for the hard climb up its sides.

Two days were spent in this section, and then Mr. Gilroy planned a visit to the Power House, located upon the edge of the river which faces Happy Isles, at the point of the crossways of the Valley. The Power House generates all the electrical current used in supplying the Park—even the camps are lighted by this means.

Where the mad waters of the river sweep from the gorge, to vainly fling its flood over the ledges of rocks that form the Nevada and the Vernal Falls, it is turned aside in its headlong race and made to join the Tenaya Creek.

Once the seething river enters the gulch, the "Rushing Waters," as the Indians named it, drops 600 feet in the cleft in the rocky walls. A curve in the trail here shows glimpses of the canyon, and it is possible for one, if careful, to approach the foot of these falls. Another wonderful view can be had from that side of the Falls, where the rocks seem to back away a bit to keep their dark faces from being washed too clean by the river.

"What a magnificent Cascade is this tumultuous flood!" exclaimed Mrs. Vernon, as they all stood at a point where the Upper Cascade could be seen in its infinite variety of scenery.

"This is Glacier Point—where I shall be hypnotized," said Mr. Gilroy.

So many were the beauties about this section of the Valley that it was mutually agreed to remain overnight at the hotel at Glacier Point. Therefore they secured accommodations and then sallied forth again to visit the famous Point.

"The hotel clerk says for us to approach the Point by this shaded road, then the wonder of the view will break upon us suddenly," advised Mr. Vernon.

So they followed the pleasant road and came out to the edge of the sheer cliff, and there stood mute and spellbound. Some of the over-awed scouts clutched at the arms of their nearest neighbors in their amazement.

From whence they stood they could gaze far down, down, down—into the rock-ribbed cavern below, five hundred fathoms down. The echoing rhythm of cataracts reached their ears and their eyes beheld the great north wall of rock, where the Yosemite Falls etch silver designs against the solid gray background.

When Rex asked if the girls were too fatigued to continue on farther, they declared "No indeed!"

"Tired! of such scenes? I should say not!" exclaimed Julie, and her friends agreed with her.

So they visited other places of interest about the

Point and then returned to the hotel for supper. That evening they were enticed forth again, to view the scenery by night. There were now enough young beaux in the party to afford each scout a gallant, and so the evening was all the more delightful.

Mr. Vernon asked his wife, as they were strolling back to the hotel: "Are you worrying over the girls and their admirers?"

"Not a bit, because there is safety in numbers, you know," was her laughing reply.

Had she guessed one iota of the fascinating proposition the Movie Stars were making to the band of girl scouts she might not have spoken so carefreely. But there is another saying, just as true as the one spoken by the Captain, which is: "That which the mind knows not, the heart does not grieve."

Whatever had been proposed and planned that evening out on the Point, was kept strictly secret from others—or those not interested in youthful follies. But this did not deter the Stars and the Scouts from planning and plotting whenever a chance offered itself.

The following morning Mr. Gilroy secured several interesting specimens of moraine from the Canyon, and by noon the Troop was on its way once more to visit the next stupendous marvel of

this greatest collection of Nature's Wonders contained in so small an area.

Before entering the Yosemite Valley it had been thought that a week would be ample time in which to see all the points of interest there, but the time passed and they lingered on, unable to say the word which would tear them away from the place.

Had not a forwarded letter come to Rex at the close of the second week in the Valley, the entire Troop might have dawdled on for another month. This letter came, however, to let Rex know that his next engagement would begin a week from that very day. He rebelled, because he was enjoying himself immensely, but it was some comfort to know that the other three actors would have to return with him, thus leaving Judith without an escort. Rex was more concerned about Judith than over his engagement with the Film Company.

When the news was told, that the Troop would lose four of its jolly members, there were loud lamentations.

"But we will not have to say good-by to-day: we have a few days extra grace, and then we will have to fly," said Rex.

That evening the young couples met and spoke in low voices of a certain plan, of which the elders in the party knew nothing and suspected less.

"Rex, you promise to send us word at once, eh?" asked Julie.

"I'll try to do more: I'll send you myself, the moment it is decided by the powers that be. I will get off for a day or two, between films, and help you break the news to the Captain," said he.

This message, which ended the Stars' vacation days with the Troop, served to urge the rest of the company away from the Yosemite, and to continue on their expedition along the Sierra Range.

Wherever a pleasant hotel offered good service and the country offered wonderful scenes, they would halt and see all that was to be found worthy of admiring or snap-shotting. Thus the days sped by and then Rex, with his chums, said good-by and drove away.

Judith and her comrades felt lost for a few days after their escorts had gone, but then the novelty of adventuring and the new places to be seen, compensated then for the loss of admirers.

They had visited all the groves of Big Trees; had gone to the top of Mt. Whitney, whence they could see Tyndall, Rixford, Goddard, Williamson, and other peaks which were from one to two thousand feet higher than the topmost crest of the range itself, which is over 14,500 feet above sea level; and now they were bound for new fields.

Not only their memory cells, but their kodak

films as well, were so crowded with beautiful scenes and amazing snap-shots that it was time to call a halt on added scenes. Therefore Mr. Vernon's announcement, that they would start for the Southern Belt of Redwoods the following day, was hailed as a salvation.

To reach this Belt of Redwoods, it was decided to drive back to San Francisco and rest a few days, and to stock up with such apparel or other necessities as might be needed, and then resume the trip to the Belt.

Back at the hotel in Frisco once more they found a batch of letters which had not been forwarded for lack of proper address. Now Faxy learned from a letter sent him two weeks before, that his cousin Sandy was located in the San Bernardino Mountains and that he hoped to have his friends come to visit him in his forest camp.

Julie heard the letter read without any sense of eagerness to go and visit her old-time admirer, and Faxy felt greatly relieved to see that the scout received the news so calmly. Now he felt sure that Sandy had no better chance at being the favorite with such a girl than he himself had. How Julie would have laughed had she dreamed of Faxy's ambitions.

Tally was sent on in advance of the Troop to select a good camp-site and to arrange for tents and

outfits for a week or two in the Redwoods. The Troop remained in San Francisco and replenished frayed wardrobes, then went on in their motors, in the direction of the Southern Belt.

On the way, they stopped to visit the beautiful gardens and orchards of Alameda County. Then they drove to Santa Cruz, where they stopped overnight. A few days later they reached Boulder Creek, where they met Tally. The Guide had arranged everything satisfactorily for the campers, and now he conducted them to their destination.

On the way there, Julie said: "I read in a book the other day in San Francisco, that Fremont and his soldiers camped in these Redwoods in 1847, Gilly. Is that so?"

"Yes; it is claimed that Fremont lived in the great stump of the Redwood which is named for him."

Mr. Vernon's thoughts were running in the trend of lumber interests, and he now remarked: "Do you girls know that the Redwood lumber is much sought after in the market? They cut as much as 600,000,000 feet of board measure, each year. That is an enormous quantity, considering the small area that it comes from."

The camp in the forest was all that Tally had said for it, and the Troop spent an enjoyable two weeks in these Redwoods, before the time came

when the Hendersons and Fairfaxes had to leave such happy company.

"We may as well break camp and start away with our friends," announced Mr. Vernon. "I'm anxious to get within reach of telephone connection, and attend to certain business affairs."

"And I want to continue my investigation in the other canyons and moraines located on the range of the San Bernardino and Mt. Diablo Mountains," added Mr. Gilroy.

Therefore it was decided to break camp and leave the Redwoods, when the other families went. A day later, the entire Troop was on its way. Then came the great surprise for the Captain!

At Boulder Creek, where the automobiles stopped to ask for mail and to settle accounts for the camping outfits, Julie was handed a thick letter with the Los Angeles postmark. She knew what it meant, and her friends surmised also.

CHAPTER XIV

VIA DIABLO RANGE TO SANDY

"HURRAH!" laughed Faxy, waving a letter above his head and turning to see how Julie would take his news.

"What's all the 'hurrahing' about?" demanded Joan, suspecting the news at once. Julie pretended she had not heard a thing.

"I've got word from Sandy. He's now waiting for us down near Hollywood. Instead of taking a leisurely trip see-sawing back and forth to Southern California, I'm going to propose now that we make direct for the San Bernardino Range, and visit with our popular Forester for that time which we would spend otherwise."

"I've got news too!" exclaimed Julie now, waving a letter over her head and keeping her gaze fixed upon Faxy, even as he had done in her case a few moments before.

"What is your news?" asked Junior eagerly.

"Mine is not for the public: it concerns a few Scouts personally," laughed Julie.

"Will it prevent you from going with us to visit Sandy?" asked Faxy.

"It will not prevent us from keeping you company as far as Los Angeles," ventured Julie meaningly.

"Oh, gee! Is it a letter from Rex?" asked several voices as one.

"It is, and I am now free to tell Verny all about it," answered Julie, glancing at the Captain to see if she had heard.

"I heard!" laughed the Captain in reply. "But I shall not be interested in anything concerning Hollywood at present. Gilly, V., and I have made our plans for the next two weeks, and they do not include Hollywood or anything *near* that place. In fact, we do not intend stopping at Los Angeles during this two-weeks mountaineering. However it might be necessary for us to stop there after the present plan ends."

Julie frowned and shook her head doubtfully, then she remarked coaxingly, "If you had such a wonderful opportunity to put the Girl Scout Organization on the World's Map, Verny, you might reconsider your ultimatum."

Mr. Vernon now had his say. "If there is to be any touring and adventuring of the mountain ranges in Southern California this season it has to be done in the next few weeks. After that time there is no interest for me in camping anywhere with a view to business."

"Same here," added Mr. Gilroy emphatically. "My specimens have to be collected and shipped East before the first of August, if I want my pay for the work. And I have to dig about in the erosions or moraines in the Diablo and San Bernardino Mountains, as well as in the vicinity of the Mohave Desert, to secure certain samples I am looking for."

"Then that means that you want us to accompany you for at least three weeks, eh?" asked Julie. It was plain to be seen that she had another idea now, to offset her first plan.

"At least two weeks, and perhaps three," agreed Mr. Gilroy.

"All right! If we go to take care of you men, will you be good and accompany us scouts on a stunt for publicity for the Organization? We have a chance to prove to the public just how wonderful and helpful is the Girl Scout Cause," said Julie.

"That depends upon the Captain. If she agrees to your proposition, I have naught to say against it," promised Mr. Vernon.

"Same here!" added Mr. Gilroy.

"All right!" instantly said Julie, "we will see that Verny does not object. And you promised, remember, to stay around and be agreeable, when we wish to have our little fun;—just as we are agreeing now to remain faithful to you and go with

you to these mountains for the next two or three weeks."

Of course, the Fairfax family, and the Hendersons had nothing to say about these arrangements, but they waited and smiled, as they listened to the plans now perfected. Then Mr. Fairfax ventured a remark.

"I suppose that means we all travel together as a Troop, same as before, until we finish the mountaineering, eh, Vernon?"

"Oh, certainly! Since Henderson and you are with me on this investigation of timber in these mountains you might as well come in under the protection of Dandelion Troop," said Mr. Vernon.

"Besides, you will find it cheaper if you travel wholesale, as we are doing," laughed Joan. "Think of the discounts you can demand, when you order by the dozens. A dozen dinners, a dozen rooms, a dozen ice-cream cones: see?"

They laughed at the remark, and Julie added: "Also you are having very select company while away your tedious hours in camp, while on the mountains."

"But this isn't telling me what I must tell Sandy?" was Faxy's impatient speech at last.

"You haven't told us just what Sandy says in his letter," retorted Julie.

"Why, he wants us to start and come to visit him

as soon as possible. And he says for us to wire him when to expect the Troop—meaning all of us included," explained Faxy.

"Then the sooner we drive away from Boulder the quicker we shall complete the contract to accompany Gilly and V. to the other mountains south of here," replied Julie.

"And you can stop somewhere along the way and wire Sandy to look for us as soon as we get there," laughed Joan.

"Which will be after the next two weeks or so," added Judith. "But that does not guarantee that we will all arrive at the same time. It all depends upon certain engagements."

"Oh pshaw! that's no way to telegraph him. I'll just send word that we cannot get farther south than Mohave for at least two weeks' time. Then we can wire him later, our other arrangements," said Faxy.

"All right. That ought to hold him down for that long," said Junior.

"He ought to know that we did not come all the way to the California Mountain Ranges just to see him and camp up near the peak of San Bernardino," said Joan.

"Not with Los Angeles and its 'attraction' almost due west of his Station," laughed Julie.

All these broad hints were given to prepare the

Captain for the news which the Scouts wished to break gradually to her. But she seemed unusually dull-witted about the entire matter; and the girls wondered whether she really heard, or whether she was only pretending not to understand. That remained to be seen!

They started off for the Diablo Range visit now, and the cars as well as the roads being in good shape the autoists made splendid time from Boulder to San Miguel, where they proposed leaving the cars to be shipped ahead to await them at Mohave. They soon had this plan attended to, and then they negotiated for good, sure-footed horses for the party, and three pack mules to carry the camping outfits.

They took the trail leading to the southern division of the Diablo Range, riding leisurely and stopping as the lumbermen dictated, and camping as long as was necessary to finish certain investigations of the timberlands in the vicinity of their camps. Then they proceeded on the way, enjoying to the full the delightful weather, the splendid fishing and hunting, and the joy of the open out-door life of the mountains.

They had used more than a week in this way before they arrived at Mt. Pinos, where Mr. Gilroy expected to find unusual samples of glacial deposits in the moraine. The Troop pitched camp on this

location, therefore, and planned the route to the Mohave Desert; while their friend sought for the specimens he had hoped to secure. In this he was disappointed, however, and, after wasting several days without finding any signs of the desired specimens he decided to continue his search across the valley, nearer the desert borders.

The Troop broke camp on the fifth day of Mr. Gilroy's stop on Mt. Pinos, and the carefree members rode away to the eastward without a thought for time, since they had more than half the season remaining to them, before it became necessary to plan about returning home.

The ride from Mt. Pinos to Mohave, where the automobiles were waiting for them, consumed two days; then the riders left the hired horses to be shipped back to San Miguel, and they proceeded on to the desert trip in the machines.

"The two weeks you men bargained for are over," was Joan's reminder, after the motors started on their way.

"But you allowed us one week's grace, before we had to follow your lead," was Mr. Vernon's reply.

"What is one little week, where a vast desert stretches out before Gilly, and dreams of wonderful discoveries fill his mind with mirages?" laughed Julie.

"I wired Sandy again, from Mohave," called

Faxy, from his car, which was running alongside the one in which Julie and Joan rode at the time.

"Who told you to?" demanded Julie.

"He did. I got a letter, in reply to my last wire, in which he begged me to send further word if I stopped at any place convenient to a telegraph office."

"Well, then, you did as he requested. That does not obligate us," was Joan's decision. "You must not forget that we Girl Scouts have the three weeks, after this one, for our *own* plans. We cannot afford to have any one ruin them."

"But you secretive girls haven't told one of us as yet, what those plans are. We are left to worry our brains into a fever, trying to discover what the secret can be?" said Mr. Gilroy.

"Providing there is present in this group of honorary members enough brain with which to worry over the affairs of Dandelion Troop," was Mr. Vernon's jeering remark.

"After hearing V. make that statement I should say that he is trying to beguile us girls into sharing our secret with him. But we know him too well to be taken in like that," laughed Julie.

"You forget, dear Scout, that I am your Captain's husband; and we have no secrets from each other. That has been one rule and regulation of our married life. Hence *I* am informed about all that *she*

knows," said Mr. Vernon, winking very significantly at Julie.

Mrs. Vernon laughed merrily and said to her girls: "Don't let him make you believe that he knows more than I do, Scouts. I haven't any secrets to share with him, simply because you girls haven't taken me into your confidence. But I will say this much for V. and Gilly: they both asked me repeatedly to tell them, and honor bright they would not mention it to you scouts just what your ideas were in wanting three weeks for your own plans."

This launched a chaffing and teasing from the Scouts against their friends, which lasted during the ride from Mohave to the edge of the desert.

Several days were spent in camping near the edge of the desert; Mr. Gilroy, accompanied by as many members of the Troop as wished to go, rode daily into the great desert plains to seek for adventures, as well as for specimens for the museums back East.

Then came the welcome decision to break camp once more, and drive on down the San Bernardino range, camping every night as they journeyed southward.

Faxy had telephoned Sandy from the town of Mentone, that the entire party was on its way up the trail to visit him at his Forest Ranger's Station. But Sandy happened to be out at the time, so the Troop went on to surprise him.

Of course, now that the meeting was so close at hand, the Scouts felt very eager to see Sandy again; and to hear of all he had done in his chosen profession, since they had said good-by to him the previous summer. Faxy kept glancing at Julie every now and then to see if she showed any interest or concern over the imminent meeting with her old admirer. But she seemed not to notice the new admirer's symptoms of jealousy, so she chatted and planned for the visit to Sandy's Station.

All that day the Troop waited impatiently for the Forest Ranger's appearance, but he came not. His associates at the Lookout on the mountain said he had gone by train to Los Angeles on a personal matter; but they had expected him back the same day. It was plainly seen that the girls were deeply disappointed in not meeting their old hero that first night in camp on his preserves. But they had to go to sleep without having seen or heard from him.

About noon of the next day a fine-looking young Ranger, in his elegantly fitting forester's uniform, rode past the camp and suddenly halted his horse. It was Sandy!

The rush of delighted Scouts that made for the rider at the moment of his appearing through the green aisle of forest trees would have pleased a less sensitive man. Sandy was so deeply affected at

the expressions of friendship, that he could do nothing but smile and smile.

After the greetings had quieted down somewhat, Faxy asked a question that had been troubling all the girls. "Where under the sun were you all yesterday, Sandy, while we were doing our best to keep down our impatience to see you again?"

"Well, that is a very funny story, if you want to hear it," replied Sandy, dropping down upon the soft grass and showing, by this act, that he had time to tell his tale to those who wished to listen.

Of course every member in Dandelion Troop wanted to hear, and soon a circle of eager listeners sat about Sandy waiting for him to begin his narrative. He began, but his eyes often roved around the circle to see Julie and watch her face, in order to give him inspiration. Faxy saw this and determined that it would not be wise to urge the Troop to remain long in camp at Sandy's station, there on the San Bernardino mountain. But he was not prepared for what his cousin was about to say now.

"A few days ago I had a telephone message, from one of the Film Directors at Hollywood, asking me to call my earliest convenience to have a business talk with him. I have been trying for several years, as you Dandelioners are aware, to get the Motion Picture Industry to feature the Forest Ranger's Work and Life. I think the public ought to be

instructed in the rules regarding forest fires, and all about preventing them, as well as how to call on the Rangers the moment one might discover a fire.

"There really are many tourists and campers in the mountains of the United States who have no knowledge of a Ranger's life and duties; and they do not know that they can get in touch with our stations at any time, day or night, and call upon us to aid them in overcoming fires, or even in cases of personal emergency.

"All last winter I worked on this idea of interesting the largest film corporations to make a yearly feature of educational value for the public. So many billions of people go to see the Movies in this country as well as in other lands, that such a picture would certainly instruct and interest everyone, from a child of seven to the old movie fan of seventy years of age.

"Well, as luck would have it, I got a message from this director the other day; so I started out to interview him, believing that he might ask me questions and invite me to write out a list of reasons for making a film such as I wanted to have produced for the benefit of the forests of the entire world.

"And guess what he really did want of me?" Sandy laughed so heartily that his hearers thought the whole visit had been a hoax.

"Well," remarked Mr. Gilroy pointedly, "after having had a most unpleasant experience with Motion Picture Directors and their sly methods of working unsuspecting American Citizens into a film without asking permission of the individuals, or offering to pay the actors of such graft, I can believe anything, Sandy!"

This opinion brought forth a loud chorus of laughter from the Troop, and Sandy wanted to know what had happened to cause such a caustic remark from the usually good-natured Mr. Gilroy.

"Oh, that is too long a tale to be told now, Sandy," said Mr. Vernon. "But I will agree to tell it to you the moment you are through with your own story. Suffice it now for me to say: that Gilly was made to play a leading role in a western holdup and he threatened to smash all the cameras in California to bits, until—ah! this is the pivot of his career in the Movies—he had a private exhibition of the film the day after it had been taken. Really, Sandy, you wouldn't believe it, if *I* say so, but these other friends, all of whom were in the audience at that private showing, will corroborate my statement as being true: Gilly looked fine and heroic in that picture! He didn't resemble himself in the least! That is why he consented to have the picture released after all. He is tickled to pieces to know that movie fans everywhere will look upon

this brave man who fights and gets the best of four terrifying outlaws of the west, as their beau ideal of a hero."

Every one but Mr. Gilroy laughed at this version of the "thriller"; when he could be heard, once more, the hero of the act remarked cynically: "Yes, and that Star which fell to earth at my shooting is still disabled, I hear, and cannot shine in the firmament of Hollywood."

Another laugh greeted this remark, and Julie added: "You sure were a *shooting* star, Gilly."

Now Sandy was urged to tell his tale and he began again: "So I rode down to the railway station and left my horse; then I went on to Los Angeles to meet the director, in the hotel, where he had promised to interview me.

"I did not expect to find him on time, because these men generally forget all about interviews. But to my surprise the man was there ahead of me, waiting for my appearance. I was ten minutes late, it seems.

"He asked me many pertinent questions, which showed me that he had read up on Forest Rangers; he then asked me if I ever had time to take a vacation—say for a week, now and then, during the season.

"I asked him the reason for trying to secure such a vacation and he told me frankly that he was plan-

ning to turn out a seven-reel picture, in which a forest ranger plays the leading part. The whole picture, he said, was to be educational, but produced and presented to the public in a story-form that would be a thriller, which would draw a crowd and be remembered long after the film had worn out from being shown.

"I had to choke down my desire to shout with joy, and I managed to seem serious while I discussed business matters with him. One of these matters concerned you girls:" Sandy paused at these words and waited for their expressions of surprise. He did not wait in vain.

"But why does it concern us?" finally asked Julie.

"When I learned from Faxy that you scouts were in California and were acquainted with several of the popular Movie Stars, who had travelled with you in the Sierras, I spoke for *you* to act the parts of campers in the forest where the fire breaks out.

"I thought we might try out a picture built upon fact: we can lead up to the crisis, which will be a forest fire, by playing the stories of those horse-thieves that stole the burros last summer, and how we caught them. There is so much good material to be used from a selection of your adventures in the mountains, that it will be a good way to exploit the Girl Scout Organization.

"That is one reason why I proposed you girls to

the man. I am going to have a reply on his decision in a few days. Meantime if you scouts will accept the hospitality of the Ranger's domains, we can pass the time of waiting very pleasantly."

Faxy noticed that Sandy looked right at Julie while he spoke the last sentence, and Faxy determined that he would remain at his post and never give his cousin any spare time in which to tell Julie how lovely she was, and how a Forest Ranger would like to act the part of Romeo to such a Juliet!

But the heroine of the play spoke for herself now.

"Your proposal comes too late, Sandy. We have had one already, and we were seriously considering you as one of our leading men in the Southwest picture. You see, we Scouts have long wished to produce a *real* Girl Scout *reel* of camp-life, and thus prove to a vast public what Scoutdom stands for, and what it does for scout members.

"By meeting Rex Hamilton and winning his interests in behalf of the Organization, we made a fine strike. When Rex went back to Hollywood he carried with him a proposition from the girls of Dandelion Troop—conditioned upon the consent of our Captain—that we would give our time and experience in a picture, which must be a serial based upon the actual adventures we have had in the past four years.

"I got a reply and a contract to sign the day we

left the Redwoods, in the Southern Coast Range. Since that time we girls have been urging Gilly and V., as well as our Captain, to cut their meandering short and start with us for Los Angeles.

"We had planned to hold a general session of all interested parties the first night we were settled in a hotel in Los Angeles, and then present the case and let the elders decide what they thought of the plan of exploiting the Girl Scouts to the world."

The moment Julie had to stop for lack of breath, Joan continued the story: "And we are going to invite you, and Faxy, and Junior, and all the boys we know, to play the male parts in our pictures."

"And you see," added Judith, "That story will need Tally, and the Captain, as well as Gilly and V. to make real pictures."

"So that is why you made me film—just to see how I would screen, eh?" laughed Mr. Gilroy.

"But I don't see where this is going to help out the Forest Ranger's picture?" complained Sandy.

"Just as much as you can help out the Girl Scouts!" retorted Julie.

"You see, Sandy, if you play a lead in our New Mexico picture, we will play the leads in your Forest Ranger's film," explained Joan.

"And not one of you has stopped to ask the Captain what she is going to do about it. All these vast interests depend upon my decision: 'to be

(Hollywood,) or not to be' within a hundred leagues of such temptation?" Mrs. Vernon smiled enigmatically.

"Oh, Verny! you wouldn't have the heart to refuse us now—after Sandy has told us how important it is to give the world the right sort of pictures!" cried a number of girls in one voice.

"How about us 'elderly men'?" teased Mr. Gilroy.

"You are 'supers' you know," explained Joan.

"Any suppers thrown in," asked Mr. Vernon jocularly.

"Indeed, yes! We will live again all the fun and fears we experienced in our first Dandelion Camp; then the adventures in the Adirondacks; and then life in the Rockies; followed by the summer in New Mexico and Arizona; and finally this season in the Redwoods."

"And what do you expect to do for the next serial number of this Movie?" asked the Captain laughingly.

"What? why, Hollywood, of course! What did you think?" replied the scouts instantly.

"Then I suppose I must consent to it being 'Hollywood'," was the Captain's reply, with a pretended sigh of resignation.

So Hollywood it was to be!

THE END

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